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"Blessed are the peacemakers" ... P.10

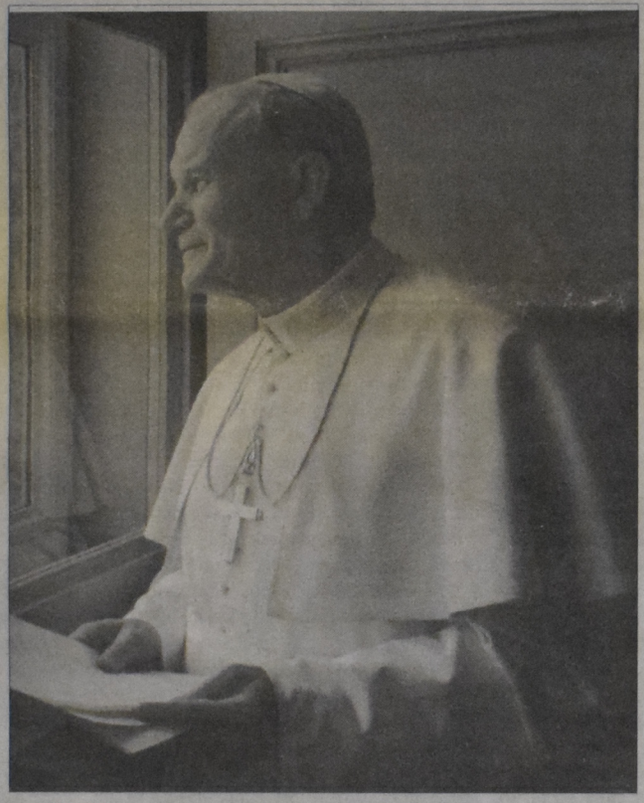
59th year of publication

Pope John Paul II, servant of Jesus Christ

Harry der Nederlanden

Karl Wojtyla, or Pope John Paul II, was a man of great faith and Christian virtue. Catholic and Protestant alike, and even those of other faiths, recognized the genuine nature of his witness. He was much more than the CEO of one of the largest religious organizations in the world; he was exemplary in the authenticity of his spiritual life and in the warmth of his humanity. While maintaining his integrity, he built bridges to others.

In his profound reflections on the nature of the human person spelled out in several encyclicals, he affirmed both the way of obedience and our bodily humanity. This posed no contradiction to him, and he embodied that affirmation and wholeness. He was a poet and a philosopher as well as a priest. Human reason and human creativity, he stressed, are no threat to faith. Faith grounds them and empowers them.



At a time when the Church was shaky and groping and many Christians felt weak over against the powers of this world, he provided an image of strength and stability, of faith as an anchor and as a more reliable compass than any ideology, whether from the East or the West. This quality emerged from his confrontation with the Communist regime in his native Poland. And it established our respect for him. It also made people in Eastern Europe – as well as the rest of us – aware of the relative weakness of a seemingly powerful system and ideology. We sensed the fear and trembling of the Communist bureaucrats at the power and hope that Karl Wojtyla set free with his bold witness to Jesus Christ.

"Fear not!" he said to the Polish people, and a great blanket of fear was lifted from them.

When Ronald Reagan died, he was widely credited for the crumbling of Communism. Now Pope John Paul II is getting the credit. His role was certainly more profound. He pointed to the vastly greater strength we find in faith in Christ, not to the superiority of democracy and free enterprise.

He stood strong against Communism, but he was no less critical of the materialism, individualism and immorality of the West. In fact, he saw it as even more dangerous to the life of faith, for it blurs the boundaries and saps true commitment.

Although the West has expressed respect, admiration and even affection for Pope John Paul II, it tended to ignore many of his teachings, whether on contraception, abortion, marriage or the role of women. Even most Catholics tended to view them as old fashioned or worse. His resistance to modernism in the church was as inflexible as his opposition to Communism. He firmly asserted the fundamentals of the Catholic faith against pressures from feminists, gay rights, liberation theology and certain reformers within the Church. He resisted any dilution of what he saw as the foundations of the faith. Many appreciated his firmness. Others, especially in the West, saw it as rigidity, and they believe he weakened the place of the Catholic Church in the West by refusing to compromise.

Over the last few years I've printed a large number of Pope John Paul II's biblical meditations in *CC* because they helped to ground us in Scripture and also as an ecumenical gesture – to remind ourselves that in spite of deep differences a strong faith flourished at the heart and head of the Catholic Church. How that accorded with his veneration of Mary, I don't know.

He was a complex man, but he discovered a deep unity and wholeness in Christ and lived it. Whatever our differences with him, he was a blessing, not just to Catholics but also to the rest of us.

Perspectives on Pope John Paul II

Here is a sampling of comments on the life and work of Karol Wojtyla, some written several years ago.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., an apologist in the Southern Baptist Church:

With the death of John Paul II, evangelicals are confronted with a sensitive question: Can we recognize genuine virtues in a man who for over a quarter of a century held an office we must expressly reject?

We should be unembarrassed and unhesitant to declare our admiration for John Paul II's courageous stand against communism, his bold defense of human dignity and human life, and his robust and substantial defense of truth in the face of postmodernism. In many of the great battles of our day, evangelicals found John Paul II to be a key ally. This was especially true with the crucial issues of abortion and euthanasia. With bold strokes and a clear voice, this pope defended human life from the moment of conception until natural death. In his encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), he argued for an implacable opposition to what he called the "culture of death" – an age that would increasingly embrace death rather than life and forfeit human dignity on the altar of human autonomy and individual rights.

In *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), John Paul argued that the modern concept of freedom as unrestrained human liberty would lead to the destruction of Christian ethics and the undermining of all authority. In this powerful statement, the pope defended the very nature of truth against postmodern denials and a culture increasingly attracted to moral relativism.

Billy Graham (on Larry King):

He traveled throughout the world to bring his Christian message to the world.... And I think he touched almost everybody in the whole world.

And he was a suffering pope, too. He suffered as much as anybody you could ever imagine. His mother died when he was young. And he had that terrible assassination attack. And through it all, he taught us how to suffer. And I think in recent days he's taught us how to die.

Michael Novak, Catholic social thinker:

The "progressives" will not forgive John Paul II because what they call sexual liberation the Pope, in a quite well-founded, traditional way, regards as the tyranny of the libido, a form of slavery. Whereas

See **Pope** *p. 3 ...*

News

John Paul II – Bridge Builder

George Vandervelde

One of the ancient titles of honor bestowed on popes is pontifex maximus, which means "bridge builder supreme." Quite apart from the meaning of this title within the Catholic Church, this title aptly describes the Pope's significance for those who are not Roman Catholic. There is no point in my supplementing the stream of media coverage and analysis that has gorged the news media. In fact, about a week into the coverage, a pundit opined that we might be "poped out." Instead, I would like to sketch only a few features that highlight the Pope's significance for those who count themselves among Evangelical and Reformed Christ-followers.

John Paul II – doesn't have a prayer

In the first year of his pontificate, John Paul visited Ireland. While there, he was planning to make a foray into Northern Ireland. The situation there was explosive. The Sunday before that planned visit to a powderkeg, I was preaching in the Willowdale Christian Reformed Church, my home congregation. In the pastoral prayer that morning, I asked the Lord to give the Pontiff wisdom and courage to speak words that would help lead to reconciliation and peace.

At the end of the service, I stood in the usual place at the back of the church to greet the people. As the congregation was filing out, I suddenly noticed a gray-haired fellow. He seemed extremely agitated. As he came closer, it was obvious that he had no intention of extending the right hand of fellowship. Instead, his hand was raised, index finger wagging in vigorous rebuke. Then, in a heavy Dutch brogue, he blurted out, "We do not pray for the Pope in a Calvinist church!"

Taken aback, I asked, "Why would we not pray for all people, including the Pope, in a Calvinist Church?"

In response, he repeated, even more stridently, "We do not pray for the Pope in a Calvinist church."

I tried again, "Why not?"

But there was no response, except another eruption of his prohibition on prayer. When he turned on his heels and marched out, I abandoned all remaining right hands of fellowship and walked with him, hoping to get some clarity what was behind this vehement reaction to a prayer for the Pope. To no avail. I could only guess at the roiling mix of emotions that fueled his anger.

The medium and the message

Five years after this encounter, the Vatican announced plans for the Pope's first visit Canada. In preparation for that event, I wrote some background articles on the Pope in this periodical. They were relatively sympathetic portrayals. With the back-of-the-church encounter in mind, I fully expected that those articles would be greeted, at least by some of the readers, with controlled antagonism at best, and with outright hostility at worst. To my great surprise and relief, the articles provoked neither reaction. Had the irate person at the back of church been the lone exception to a general appreciation of the Pope?

My guess is that five years of exposure to this Pope explains the absence of rancor. By the time of his visit to Canada, the world had had ample opportunity to observe John Paul II. What Evangelical-Reformed Christians had seen and heard of him made a strictly hostile stance difficult to maintain.

The media had touted and created the Pope as media superstar. They eagerly beamed images of the charismatic man in white around the globe. Many media moguls and pundits no doubt loved this messenger, while hating his message.

But despite all their powers, they could not sever the medium from the message. In a culture where the media treats religion in general and Christianity in particular as quaint, irrelevant, or just plain dumb, a man arrives on the world stage, whose message is clear, unflinching, and unapologetic: Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, not just of personal life, but also of politics, economic systems, of culture itself. Thus, the message of Jesus Christ as redeemer of life and of the planet becomes news in the public square. How could Christians of whatever stripe, possibly against their own inclinations, help but inwardly applaud this event?

Witness to Christ – in word

John Paul became, for the world and for all Christians, the most visible public witness to Jesus Christ in the 20th century. In his first official address, he called out to the world: "Be not afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of states, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Be not afraid. Christ knows 'what is man.' He alone knows it. I ask you . . . I beg you, let Christ speak to you. He alone has words of life, yes, of eternal life."

This was his constant theme: Christ, "Redeemer of Humankind" (the title of his first encyclical), Redeemer of the World. To Jesus, the Christ, John Paul bore compelling witness.

Witness to Christ – in person

Some twenty years after his first official utterances, the focus on Christ resounds in more personal tones. He calls on all to contemplate the face of Jesus. The men and women of our time – often perhaps unconsciously – ask believers not only to 'speak' of Christ, but in a certain sense to 'show' him to them. And is it not the church's task to reflect the light of Christ in every historical period, to make his face shine also before the generations of the new millennium?

Then he adds, "Our witness would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face." Such contemplation is mediated by Scripture. Quoting Saint Jerome, the Pope insists, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." He continues: "Remaining firmly anchored in Scripture, we open ourselves to the action of the Spirit (cf. Jn 15:26) from whom the sacred texts derive their origin...."

The emphasis on embodied witness was visible in the Pope's life. We were more than listeners. We not only heard a witness to Christ. We saw a witness to Christ. Whatever our distance from all things Roman and despite our differences with the Pope on a host of issues (think only of his Marian devotion), we could not help but see a man of God.

The Pope and George Vandervelde

Man of Prayer

John Paul's entire person testified to a very deep spirituality. He spent a great deal of time in concentrated prayer. Together with a few others, I was privileged to be a guest at a lunch with the Pope in the papal apartment high above St. Peter's square. After the meal, we walked across the hall to his beautiful small chapel.

The pope knelt on one of the front benches, while we did the same on the other individual benches. Almost immediately, he seemed to be lost in utmost concentration for five or ten minutes (time melts). Great intensity and deep peace seemed to meet on his face. John Paul was a man of prayer.

In many of his writings he returns to the theme of spirituality and prayer. If you really want to follow Christ, if you want your love for him to grow and last, then you must be faithful to prayer. It is the key to the vitality of your life in Christ. Without prayer your faith and love will die.

When it comes to prayer, the Pope does not present himself as a super-Christian. He writes, "And then you ask me how the Pope prays, I answer you: like every Christian – he speaks and he listens. Sometimes, he prays without words, and then he listens all the more."

So concerned is he that the believer persist in prayer that he considers the temptation to stop praying: "When it is difficult therefore to pray, the most important thing is not to stop praying, not to give up the effort. At these times, turn to the Bible and go to the Church's liturgy. Meditate on the life and teaching of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Ponder the wisdom and counsel of the Apostles and the challenging messages of the Prophets. Try to make your own the beautiful prayers of the psalms. You will find in the inspired word of God the spiritual food you need."

It was the seamless integration between the Pope as global witness to Christ as Redeemer of the cosmos and the pastor who cared about ordinary people that made him an extraordinary bridge-builder. A detail in the accompanying picture presents a tiny vignette of the Pope's personal touch. This picture was taken the first time I met the Pope (I had been asked to attend the Bishops Synod for America, held at the Vatican in 1997). I had just been introduced to the Pope as he was leaving the Synod hall at the end of a long day.

After a brief exchange, I went back to my seat to fetch my briefcase, when someone tapped me on the shoulder and said, "The Holy Father wants to see you." My first thought: "Oh no! What did I do wrong?" I turned around and saw the Pope and the whole entourage, patiently waiting for me.

When I got back, he said, in perfect Dutch, "Goeden avond" ("good evening"). I was so taken aback that the first Dutch words that came out of my mouth were, "Welterusten" ("sleep well").

That little incident, tells you volumes about this Pope's personal touch, as well as about his sense of humor. He had been sitting through a long day of deliberations and speeches (not a few of them boring). Already then he was in less than perfect health. It was late in the evening. He must have been eager to be spirited out of there and get back to his apartment. A slight delay for a courtesy greeting to a totally unknown and, in the papal scheme of things, totally insignificant "separated brother" is one thing. But then, to take the added time for that extra gesture of kindness and humor tells you a great deal about the his ability to connect at a personal level.

If you examine the accompanying picture, you will notice that the story of the Pope's extraordinary ability to connect at the ordinary, human level is told in the hands. This Pope connected at multiple levels, close up, and at great distance. In it all, he was the supreme bridge-builder – not as a politician or diplomat, or media star, nor even as "ruler" of a church – but as witness to Christ. Despite all the criticism that can and should be directed towards this Pope and his legacy, he was a supreme bridge builder, pontifex maximus – also for Evangelicals and Reformed Christians.

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Politics

. . . Pope *continued from p. 1*

they want eagerly to accept the norms of secular society on divorce, homosexual acts, premarital sex, and other pelvic desires, the Pope stands with "the democracy of the dead," the voice of the faithful of the past, so many martyrs, so many lovers of chastity.

Richard Neuhaus, author, editor of *First Things*:

The theme of human dignity is everywhere present in the numerous teaching documents of this pontificate. John Paul's prophetic humanism exhorted the Polish people to stand up and "live in the truth," thus precipitating the beginning of the end of Soviet Communism. The same prophetic humanism warns the affluent West against a consumerism that reduces the human person to a unit of consumption, while, at the same time, it exhorts us to open the circle of economic productivity and exchange to the poor peoples of the world. It is also prophetic humanism that compels John Paul to reach out to other world religions in order to heal the wounds of the past and to build together a future worthy of the divinely bestowed dignity of the human person....

Leo D. Lefebvre, *Christian Century*:

Wojtyla's life has never been free from conflict and controversy He has described his role as pope as that of being a "sign that will be contradicted ... a challenge." He has been criticized by liberal Catholics and Protestants for demanding strict loyalty to traditional positions on ordination and sexual ethics, and he has been hailed by conservatives as the pope of "the Catholic restoration." He has disappointed Protestant ecumenical leaders for his uncompromising stances, and he has aroused the ire of Orthodox Christians for his efforts to establish the Catholic Church in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. John Paul is a complex figure whose thought escapes stereotypes; the effects of his pontificate will be many-sided....

In the Pope's eyes, the greatest threat to Christian identity arises from the subjectivism, rationalism, relativism and indifferentism of much of modern Western culture as expressed by its philosophers and lived by millions of people who never read philosophy. Moral relativism is but one aspect of a broader relativizing trend which undermines the quest for the truth in any form. Cut off from metaphysical and religious foundations, all forms of culture risk being dissolved into forms of competition fueled by the will to power....

Peggy Polk & Kevin Eckstrom, Religion News Service:

In a larger sense, John Paul saw humanity imperiled by twin threats – the economic brutality of globalization and runaway capitalism, and old-fashioned political tyranny, which trampled individual dignity and freedom. He worried about both when he described the state of man in 1991: "At times it seems as though he exists only as a producer and consumer of goods, or as an object of state administration."

Still, he will be remembered less for humbling the mighty than for lifting up the young, the poor, the sick and the disabled.

Michael Valpy, *Globe and Mail*:

To those who championed him, the Polish romantic nationalist born Karol Jozef Wojtyla was a towering force of humanistic and spiritual illumination and an unparalleled global evangelist who compelled a noisy world to pay attention to his words.

His semi-official biographer, the conservative U.S. Catholic theologian George Weigel, called him the most important pope since the Reformation of the 16th century and deemed him worthy of the appellation "Great"....

To his critics, however, he was a barrier to humanity's dignified progress, a menace to an overcrowded planet because of his rejection of artificial birth control and an out-of-touch papal autocrat who considerably widened the gulf between the church's progressive and conservative factions throughout his 25-year-long reign and bungled the horrific sexual-abuse scandals that soiled the Roman Catholic Church in North America....

Paradoxically, for a man so incomparably visible as John Paul, it became apparent that he was always out of focus, a pastiche of apparent contradictions, his purpose and his intellect beyond the grasp of so many of his flock, as well as of the journalists who trekked after him around the world.

Kenneth L. Woodward, *Newsweek*:

John Paul was the most photographed public figure of his era, a man seen in person by more people than even evangelist Billy Graham. Of all the images he leaves behind, four stand out as markers of a remarkable papacy: the defiant new pope, summoning the allegiance of millions of fellow Poles during his triumphant first pilgrimage to his communist-run homeland in 1979; the magnanimous pope, forgiving the deranged Turk who shot him, Mehmet Ali Agca; the stern pope, admonishing the kneeling Father Ernesto Cardenal, the Sandinista Culture minister, in Nicaragua, and the contrite pope, placing a handwritten acknowledgment of Christian sins against the Jewish people in a crevice of the Western Wall in Jerusalem....

Although a pope is by definition the chief teacher, pastor and administrator of the Roman Catholic Church, John Paul II saw himself primarily as an evangelist. From his first appearance on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, he proclaimed to a worldwide audience that "Christ, Christ is the answer."...

For Wojtyla, Christ was not only the revelation of God to man but also the revelation of what it means to be truly human. Translating this Christian humanism into the language of political philosophy, he challenged governments to recognize the freedom and dignity of every individual as the object of God's love.

Tony Karon, *TIME* Magazine:

But to most of the Catholic faithful worldwide, John Paul II was venerated not simply for his evangelism and his interventions in the political world, but as a contemporary Catholic philosopher without peer, capable, at times, of immense forgiveness (such as the forgiveness of his would-be assassin) and driven by an evangelical passion recalling the great wanderings of the Apostle Paul. In his witness they see the latter-day equivalent of an Old Testament prophet, standing as a bulwark and beacon against those aspects of Western culture deemed both ungodly and death-oriented....

But if his insistence on theological conformity inside the church was absolute, his warmth and generosity in reaching out to Christians outside the Catholic communion and to other faiths was without precedent. The tension between those two qualities occasionally prompted his own theological enforcer, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, to issue pastoral letters clarifying the limits of the Vatican's embrace of the Protestants or the Orthodox....

John Paul II was also extraordinary in his embrace of a mystic spirituality centered on the cult of the Virgin Mary. He was known to have prostrated himself for hours at a time before statues of the Virgin, and believed she interceded to save him from an assassin's bullet....

Nicholas Wolterstorff in *Books and Culture* on the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

Calvinists have been known to say some rather bracing things about Catholic modes of thought in general, and about popes in particular. Could it be that those disputes are on the way to disappearing? For I find myself in almost complete agreement with what the pope says about the relation of faith and reason.... Such convergence between these two traditions, though disappointing to the agonistic spirit implanted in all of us by life in a competitive society, is a wonderful thing for anyone formed by the spirit of the gospel....

"At the deepest level," says the pope, "the autonomy which philosophy enjoys is rooted in the fact that reason is by its nature oriented to truth and is equipped moreover with the means necessary to arrive at truth." But then, after a few intervening paragraphs, comes this reminder: "it is necessary to keep in mind" that the "formulations" actually offered by philosophy "are shaped by history and produced by human reason wounded and weakened by sin."...

It's my own deep hope, speaking now both as philosopher and as Reformed Protestant, that the pope's call for boldness will embolden theologians and philosophers to do exactly what he is calling for. In doing so, they will both respect the extraordinary dignity of human reason and honor the love displayed by God in revealing to us dimensions of truth that would otherwise forever have eluded us, or left us in wavering indecision.

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Editorial

Beneath the cross of Jesus

Harry der Nederlanden

My wife and I were to lead the tenebrae service on Good Friday. The liturgy was taken straight from *Reformed Worship*, but we had issues with it. Among the fourteen "stations of the cross" there was one entitled "A woman wipes Christ's face."

I blinked. Had I missed something in the Gospels? Paging through my Bible, I looked in vain for any mention of a woman coming to relieve Christ's suffering as he lugged the cross toward Calvary. Even Simon of Cyrene did not volunteer to carry the cross. He was drafted.

Now, I have no objection to historical fictions or dramatizations around biblical events like *The Robe* or *Ben Hur*, but it seems inappropriate in a solemn tenebrae service.

The added scene also strikes as very much at odds with the biblical accounts. There, not even Jesus' closest disciples come through for him. They fall asleep when he is agonizing in the garden, flee when he is arrested and pretty much vanish from the scene throughout his trial and execution. Only Peter hangs around – and ends up denying his master.

Whatever one may think of Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*, his gesture strikes me as more biblical in spirit. One of the hands shown holding the spike that is driven into Jesus' hands is Gibson's. On Good Friday we sing, "Mine, mine was the transgression, but thine the deadly pain." On Good Friday we remember, not that we ministered to him, but that he ministered to us. We only added to his suffering.

But there was more in the *Reformed Worship* liturgy that caused us discomfort. On several occasions the litany alluded to "this, the hour of your death." In other words, it pretended that Jesus is dying right at the moment that we are commemorating his death.

This may well have been done for dramatic purposes – to make his crucifixion more vividly present – but theologically it seems inappropriate. At the time of the Reformation, as Christians rediscovered the biblical message of justification by faith, they took a firm stance against the idea that the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was insufficient and that he had to be sacrificed again and again to pay for our sins. This was why the Reformers (and the Heidelberg Catechism) called the Mass an idolatry. Some even gave their lives to witness to the importance of that difference.

(According to a study committee that reported to the last CRC Synod, the Roman Catholic Church never really intended to teach that Christ was being sacrificed all over again in the Mass, but many popular Catholic writings still don't make that clear.)

So my wife and I changed a few words in the litany to eliminate the offending phrases – to the chagrin of one person in the congregation. After the service someone approached me to object to the revisions.

"We're losing our Reformed sense of discernment," I thought to myself. "Do people no longer notice the difference? Or don't they care?"

Ironically, a couple of days later I got rapped on the knuckles for the same lack of discernment. One of our readers called in to object to the April 4 cover picture of *CC*: "That's not how we celebrate Easter," I was told. "Christ is no longer on the cross. He is risen. *CC* should have featured a picture of the empty tomb."

I was at a loss for words. I agreed, "But this isn't an Easter picture, I countered – this is a Good Friday picture. After all, we still commemorate Jesus' crucifixion. Besides, even Protestant artists have continued painting pictures of Christ on the cross."

After the caller hung up, it dawned on me that she was only doing what I had done in revising the Good Friday litany. She was asserting that Protestant difference. To this day, when Protestant churches display a cross in or on the church, the cross is bare, while Catholic churches traditionally display crucifixes with Christ still on the cross.

It's a theological statement, a confession. At its heart is a teaching about the once-for-all sufficiency of Christ's suffering and death – the teaching of justification by faith alone as defended by Luther. When Christ cried, "It is finished!" that means God requires no further payment. Through his life and death 2000 years ago, a Jewish rabbi called Jesus did everything required to make us right with God. We are not required to repeat that act of atonement, nor are we able in any way to add to it.

Protestants in the past have even objected to the enactment of the stations of the cross. To some the exercise smacked of penitential rituals – like crawling up hundreds of stairs on your bare knees or whipping yourself or wearing a hair shirt. They were seen as attempts to help pay for your sins by your own suffering because Christ's suffering didn't quite cover the tab. Protestantism has followed Luther in his emphatic repudiation of all such efforts because they result only in despair.

Does that mean we must abandon and reject any meditation on the suffering and cross of Christ? Obviously not. Christ himself instituted two sacraments of remembrance. Both focus on his death. In baptism, we remember that Christ died and was buried. In fact, it is a symbolic participation in the death of Christ. We die with him and are raised as new creatures, part of a new humanity living in a new creation. In our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we not only remember his suffering and dying in our place, we even ingest his body and blood. It's hard to imagine a more dramatic kind of participation.

These two sacraments – symbols of the heart of Christian worship – suggest that the cross ought to be at the center of our liturgy and worship. The Reformed model does that, though not always explicitly. The preaching of the Word or the reading of the law calls forth our communal confession of sin, our repentance, a declaration that in Christ our sins are forgiven, and our acceptance of that forgiveness. Then we are sent on our way into the world with a Word/Law that no longer weighs heavy on us because it reminds us of our guilt but with a Word that inspires, renews and directs us, a Word that imbues us with hope and joy because it reveals to us the outlines of the world to come.

That's not just a "model" for worship; that's a paradigm for the Christian life. It's even a paradigm for Christian thinking and Christian social action. Life is a journey and thinking and acting are processes. They are not static, stable positions or conditions. One moment gives way to another. There's a time for building up and a time for breaking down, a time to celebrate and a time to mourn, a time to participate in the victory of Christ and a time to participate in his death. You can't have one without the other. A seed must "die" before it sprouts up into a shoot and then grows into a tree that produces fruit and its own seed.

Scripture tells us that to follow Christ is to take up the cross. So it must never disappear from view. This does not mean that the Christian life is nothing but a vale of tears. Christ taught that we can be happy, filled with joy, even in the midst of hardship.

Some Christian preachers have tried to tidy up this matter of suffering, suggesting that only suffering persecution for witnessing boldly qualifies as Christian suffering. But suffering occurs on many levels and has many causes. Believers and unbelievers alike suffer from the brokenness of the world. This includes hardships of nature like drought and tsunamis as well as injustices perpetrated by tyrants or by global economics. We also suffer from diseases like malaria, AIDS, bi-polar disorder or clinical depression. Some forms of suffering are partly of our own making, partly genetic and partly social pressure. We suffer terribly at the death of loved ones and at the break-up of marriages. And in some parts of the world, one war follows another, calamity after calamity devastates villages, regions, countries, and people flee from one refugee camp to another. Even the good that we would do often has unforeseen consequences, doing harm rather than good.

Knowing the good news of the Gospel does not dispel this suffering. To the contrary, a large part of suffering comes from the fact that as image bearers of God we know with every nerve fibre of our being that this is not how it was meant to be. Christians are even more sharply aware (or ought to be) of the discrepancy between the City of God and the city of man. That knowledge pours salt in our wounds.

In his suffering Christ does not sort out the various kinds of suffering. He took on our humanity to address it all. But since he has borne the wrath on sin, that pain we feel is no longer the pain of punishment and wrath. That's gone. What we feel now is the pain of transformation, of purification, of being refashioned by the Potter into his image.

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Book review: *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad still threatens America and the West*

Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West,
By Robert Spencer, Regnery Publishing, Inc, 352 pp, $38,95.
Reviewed by Harry Antonides

But the truth is that Islam is not the name of a 'Religion,' nor is 'Muslim' the title of a 'Nation.' In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its tenets and ideals. (Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, 1903-1979)

There is one question that will not go away when considering the place of Islam in the modern world: Is it a religion of peace or war?

To put in other words: Were the perpetrators of 9/11 true to Islam, as they claimed? Or were they fanatics who violated the basic teachings of that religion?

War or peace?

The problem is that both adherents of Islam and non-Muslim experts disagree fundamentally about this. A related problem is that the Koran and other authoritative Islamic writings contain injunctions that come down on opposite sides of this issue. That's why those who want clarity need to look at the history of Islam and its scriptures (the Koran, Hadith, the life of Muhammad), as well as the texts of its authoritative commentators.

Robert Spencer, who has been a longtime student of Islam, has done just that in his *Onward Muslim Soldiers*. The author takes a well-documented look at the notion of jihad (holy warfare) in the teachings and practices of Islam, which burst on the world scene in the first half of the seventh century.

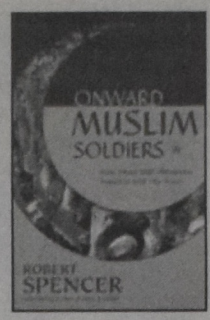
This book is divided into three parts. Part one is an overview of the current state of jihad, especially in Europe. Part two deals with jihad in history with special attention to the Koran and the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Part three deals with what the author calls the jihad cover-up and concludes with some suggestions for responding to jihad terrorism. It includes a superb index.

The Koran and the other Islamic writings clearly teach that Muslims are called to strive in the *defence* and *expansion* of the Islamic faith. The controversy now rages about the true meaning of jihad. Some say that it merely refers to the inner struggle of the believing Muslim to become a better person, that is, a more faithful follower of the Prophet Muhammad.

They insist that jihad does not mean the use of violence and war to advance the cause of Islam. They are quick to refer to sections of the Koran that state there shall not be any compulsion in religion (Sura 2:256) or that forbid suicide (Sura 2:195).

The problem is that this interpretation does not correspond with other injunctions in the Koran and in related Islamic texts, nor does it reflect the history of Islam.

The outspoken ex-Muslim Ibn Warraq has described the Koran as the most "gnomic, elusive, and allusive of holy scriptures," enabling readers to come to quite different conclusions about its message. Nevertheless, the preponderance as well as the vehemence of the warlike injunctions leave little doubt about the Koran's radical message of antagonism toward non-Muslims. Following are a few excerpts:



When the sacred months are over slay the idolaters wherever you find them. Arrest them, besiege them, and lie in ambush everywhere for them, If they repent and take to prayer and render the alms levy, allow them to go their way. God is forgiving and merciful. (Sura 9:5)

Fight against such of those to whom the Scriptures were given as believe in neither God nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His apostle have forbidden, and do not embrace the true Faith, until they pay tribute out of hand and are utterly subdued. (Sura 9:29)

The Prophet Muhammad, as recorded by imam Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810-870), explained his own role in waging war on behalf of the religion he founded:

I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight against the people until they testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and perform As-Salat (prayers) and give Zakat [obligatory charity], so if they perform all that, then they save their lives and properties from me except for Islamic laws, and their reckoning (accounts) will be with (done by) Allah.

Jihad revived

Although the notion of jihad has waxed and waned during the fourteen centuries of Islam, it is a central part of Islamic teaching. It functioned powerfully during the early centuries of Islam's rapid spread across

Continued on p.8...

"What did Terri want?" The wrong question in the Schiavo case

At the time I am writing this (Good Friday, 2005), Terry Schiavo, the Florida woman over whom a major "right-to-life" versus "right-to-die" debate is consuming the American public, is close to death in a Pinellas Park, Florida hospice. According to the order of a judge, supported by courts up to the highest in the land, she has been denied all water and food for a week now so that she can die. In short, the law is executing her.

The conclusion that all "experts" are deducing from this tragic case, a conclusion with which all media outlets are now bombarding us is: "Make your wishes known. Tell your loved ones what you want and put it in writing. Draft a living will. Never let someone else determine that you will live out your life in some miserable vegetative state against your will." The entire tragicomedy of judicial missteps and malfeasance twisted around and around this question: "What did Terri want?" Since she did not have a living will, who do we trust? Her parents and extended family who vow to keep her comfortable and alive at their own expense and effort or her cheating husband who has broken his "in sickness and in health" marriage vow to shack up with another woman and father two children? While I sympathize with those who say the husband lost his proprietary rights when he broke his marriage vow and that the parent's wishes should have precedence, this is still the wrong question.

It is the state's responsibility to guard the sanctity of life; even if a person *wants* to commit suicide, the law steps in to protect that person from their own wills which have gone astray. The law's interest in preserving life is based on an exalted view of the dignity and worth of each individual human life. Period. No questions asked about the "usefulness" of the life, or whether others want the life preserved. Even if a majority agree someone's life should be ended, the state refuses to accede. The only life a state is permitted to take is the life of a criminal convicted of a capital offense. In all other cases, the state does everything in its power to safeguard life.

Why has this not happened in the Terri Schiavo case? It's very simple. When the U.S. Supreme Court decided that women have the right to kill their offspring by means of a proxy choice regardless of the inherent dignity and worth of the child being killed, it opened the Pandora's box now spewing its evil demons all over our culture of death. If we want to get a clear picture of where the derailed train of the state's task to protect the life of the innocent and weak went off the track, we need go no farther than to the 1992 U.S. Supreme Court's defence of Roe v. Wade in its "Panned Parenthood v. Casey" judgment. Here's what the court said: "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

There you have it; we are autonomous, self-determining, self-authenticating creatures, and nothing must prevent us living out that vision. So the lesson of the Terri Schiavo tragedy is: "Make your will known to all, clearly, and in writing!" This is liberalism's credo: "I am will; I determine my own destiny." But is that true? Are we first of all creatures of will? Does our dignity depend on our ability to assert our will? That is the only conclusion we can come to in the rhetoric of those who believe Terri should be left free "to die with dignity." I humbly submit that this is wrong, wrong, wrong. Even those who through tragic circumstances lack the full capacity of will and the ability to make it known, must be given the benefit of life's possibilities and potentiality. Life is such a mystery, we do not know what the purpose of such lives is; only God does, he is the proper arbiter of Terri's and our destiny. The state must be God's servant in this.

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Dwindling numbers of immigrants, but busy, busy

Immigrantenhuis in Geldnood

Harry der Nederlanden

Every time I open the storage boxes to begin digging into the back issues of *Calvinist Contact*, I get tears in my eyes. Nostalgia for the good old days? No, I'm not a sentimentalist. The back issues are slowly, and in some cases not so slowly, moldering away into dust. Some of them fall apart in my hands as I open them.

But I'm not weeping about the potential loss of our history either. I think I'm allergic to the dust and whatever else is brewing inside the boxes. Some of the contents apparently got wet some time in the distant past. The issues reporting on the Holland Marsh flood, for example, are appropriately stained by a dark waterline as if they themselves were caught in the flood.

I'm afraid that it won't be long before many of the back issues will be unreadable. So it goes. Much is remembered. Some by being written down, though that is always a very selective thing. But a great deal is also lost, some of it forever. That is tinged with sadness. But not completely.

The Lord said, "Behold, I am making everything new!" So to say goodbye to the old is even scriptural. The Bible even has some good things to say about forgetting. I have reason to quote them to my wife every so often.

To remember everything would be a burden. It would keep you awake at night. So although seeing the back issues of *CC* moldering away into dust makes my eyes tear and my nose drip, somehow it all seems quite fitting – especially in the light of Van Ruler's meditations on Ecclesiastes. There's a time for publishing and a time for moldering.

There's also a time, however, for celebrating anniversaries and digging eagerly into smelly old boxes.

Jasper Avenue

A special correspondent from The Netherlands reports in the Nov. 5, 1954 issue that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Netherlands Reformed Church (Gereformeerde and Hervormde) were planning talks. This was shortly after the big meeting of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, Illinois emphasizing ecumenicity. So it took 50 years for the talks to bear fruit and for the two bodies to reunite.

The same issue marks the 50th anniversary of the city of Edmonton. That detail gets mentioned here only because I grew up on the outskirts of that great city and participated in the celebrations that year – even though technically we were not part of Edmonton. The *CC* article says that the Edmonton Journal published photos of Jasper Avenue, the main downtown street, taken 50 years earlier showing wooden sidewalks, the wooden framework of new buildings going up and horse-drawn buggies.

I recall gazing at the photographs. The store fronts, the wooden sidewalks and the hitching rails – they looked like scenes from a western movie. I heaved a sigh. Ah, to have been born 50 years earlier! Instead of being sent to school, I'd have saddled my pony and trotted off to round up cattle and have adventures. Every grade five boy had a cowboy hat in those days. But, alas, none of us had a horse – except my friend Chuckie Williams. He had a horse, a cowboy hat, a leather jacket with fringes, a guitar, and he could sing through his nose like a real cowboy.

By 1954 Jasper Avenue was a busy street. Every two weeks the Beverly bus took me downtown, dropping me off between Woodwards and Eatons on 101st street. From there I'd make my way to Jasper Avenue with my library books under my arm. A few blocks east along Jasper Avenue a pedestrian tunnel led to the public library tucked behind all the stores. It was a majestic old building overlooking the North Saskatchewan River which flowed eastward in the valley far below.

The main entrance was flanked by huge pillars, and the broad stone steps led up to big heavy doors. But us kids used a small entrance that led to the basement, where the children's books were kept. In the summer you could read your book sitting in the grass beside the library and enjoy the view of the river valley. It was also a favorite place for bums to catch a little snooze in the sun. One of them once told me what it was like mining gold in the Yukon in the old days. He also warned me against the evils of liquor, although he reeked of it. "Never start drinking," he told me. I never did. (Kosher wine doesn't count, does it?)

Letter writing

The "Women's Corner" in another 1954 issue provided instruction on letter writing to family back in Holland. Maintaining contact with those left behind is often left to the woman of the house, says the column. It talks of the pain of separation, reminding busy immigrant families that the parents left behind may be suffering from a huge sense of loss and emptiness.

The column urges the women to write often, every week if possible, describing their life in the new country to those in the old country so they get some idea of what their lives are like. And never forget to pray for your family back in Holland. In prayer, says the writer, the distance that separates us disappears.

Most in the post-war immigration left, thinking they would never again see those waving goodbye on the pier. Crossing the Atlantic took ten days or longer. My parents didn't see their brothers and sisters again until more than ten years later.

The Communist threat

The front page stories of the issues numbered 98, 99, and 100 (Oct. - Nov., 1954) are all about Europe's attempts to provide a united front against the Soviet threat. The countries were meeting in Paris to create a West European Union. Germany and France still had differences to work out over the Saar Valley. The whole world looked on "holding its breath in suspense" says one of the opening lines. For a while it looked as if the talks would falter over the 300 year-old issue of the Saar. But at last, the headlines of Nov. 5, 1954, announce, an agreement has been reached.

Under the agreement, after nine years of occupation, West Germany would get complete independence, with the Allied soldiers remaining only as guests. Germany was also welcomed as the twelfth member of NATO. (Recently the U.S. has taken action to gradually close most of its bases in Germany. Some German towns have grown to rely on their presence.)

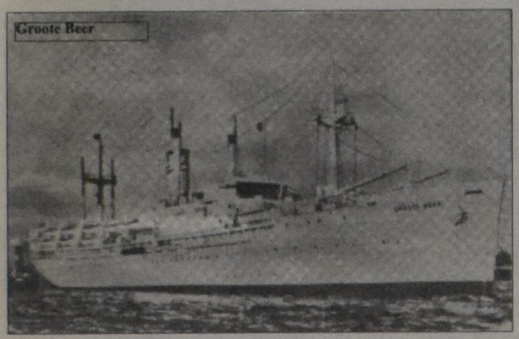
The Dutch correspondent for *CC* concluded that the Paris conference would change the political landscape of the world.

A subsequent issue reports that one of the Arab nations – Iraq – has aligned itself with the West. Iraq's choice was influenced by its decision to establish a mutual defence treaty with Turkey, and Turkey is part of NATO, so Iraq, too, turned its face westward.

Who needs the Yanks?

In Canada one of the hot news items was the deal made with the U.S. to join in the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent was being inundated by Canadian citizens

Pake Sipke Bakker reading CC (1969) PHOTO BETTY VAN DE KEMP



who wanted Canada to build the seaway on its own. St. Laurent had said on several occasions that Canada was prepared to do so, but it turned out that our P.M. was bluffing to put pressure on the U.S., which was dragging its heels. Apparently many Canadians were fooled as well, and they were happy to do big things without the Yanks.

Exasperated by the flood of letters, St. Laurent did what many politicians do in such a situation – blame the media for misinforming the public.

Fewer immigrants

The front page picture of the April 15, 1955 issue features the Groote Beer as it arrives in Canada for the last time, carrying 273 Dutch immigrants. It made the Atlantic crossing in 7 days. The number of Dutch immigrants to Canada dropped dramatically. While in some areas jobs were plentiful in Europe, in Canada unemployment was high and growing. And a smaller percentage of the immigrants were Christian Reformed. A report by the Immigration Committee says that at the end of 1954 there were 115 organized congregations in Canada and 17 unorganized groups with a total membership of 38,275.

Inside, a short article reported on the first annual meeting of the Ontario Federation of Christian Farmers on March 27 in London, Ontario. In Hamilton a meeting was held April 9, 1955 to discuss the possibility of creating a Christian broadcasting organization in Canada. And in Terrace, B.C., a local of the CLAC announced that it was seeking certification to represent the workers at the Pothe Lumber Co. They were busy in Terrace, for they not only organized a Christian School Society that year but also set up a Christian Recreation Committee to provide for a library, films and singing. One gets the impression that they didn't have exercise in mind when they spoke of recreation. No wonder, after spending a day in a lumber mill, reading a book by the fire sounds more inviting than cross-country skiing.

60th Anniversary of the liberation of Holland

May 5 the Dutch Canadian Veterans Association is celebrating the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Holland by Canadian soldiers by taking a Canadian veteran to dinner. This is probably the last time we can show our appreciation to these ageing vets.

If you would like to sponsor a couple, send $50.00 to the Dutch Canadian Veteran Association, 420 Lodor Street, Ancaster, ON l9G 2Z8.

The sponsor's name will be put on the invitation card.

On Location: *Spring puts a spring in my step*

Theresa Miedema

Each year I marvel at the way the earth comes back to life after winter. Don't get me wrong: I love winter as much as the next Canadian. Truth be told, I am the biggest fan of winter that I know. I love a good snowstorm. I love running outside when the snow is whirling down around me, muffling the sounds of cars and covering everything in a fresh white coat. I view snow shoveling as a cross-training exercise. I love to ski. I don't mind the layers of clothing or the bulky jackets. I love how every relatively flat piece of parkland in Toronto is flooded to create an outdoor hockey arena.

Still, even I, the biggest fan of winter, look forward to the beginnings of spring. I especially love the first few mild days. We all seem to come out of our winter cocoons at the same time, stretching and blinking at the sunlight. There is that first day that I go outside without my winter jacket on. The neighbors' kids are out biking like mad, and the trees are beginning to bud again. And that smell in the air? That smell is not the scent of another winter storm coming, but rather the sweet smell of snow melting and things growing.

Pushing out the calves

Have you ever seen calves that are released into a nice green pasture for the first time? The National Ballet of Canada could not put on a more lively and celebratory dance. These calves have lived most, if not all, of their lives in a shadowy barn without much natural light. They have lain in straw and have never roamed in natural grass. They have breathed warm, stale barn air rather than the crisp, fresh air of the outdoors.

Moving calves into the pasture can be hard work. Plato's metaphor of the cave comes to mind, for the calves must be dragged – literally dragged and pushed! – from the shadows of the barn into the bright outdoors. The calves resist and resist. They become jittery when they see the first hint of their shadow at the barn door. No matter what you tell them, they still don't want to go.

But then there is the magical moment of transformation. Somehow the calves have been pushed out of the shadowy interior and into the bright sunlight. They have been released into a pasture carpeted with wonderful green grass. After a moment or two of bewilderment, pure joy sets in. The calves romp through their newfound home, literally kicking their heels up in delight. The calves bound through the pasture, delighting in the sunlight, grass, the warm earth, the fresh air. Even a seasoned farmer has to smile when he sees such calves, for at that moment there is no greater celebration of spring.

A time for indulgences

It has been a while since I have had the opportunity to take calves out to the pasture. I miss it. But the city has its own sights and sounds of spring. The birds come back, for example. Their singing is noticeable because it has been absent for so long. I start to see little sparrows around again. A number of the little birds gather at the local bagel shop because the tables have been set up outside again, which means that patrons will be dropping crumbs to eat.

And what of the delight of the first coffee taken outside? As a Torontonian, I highly value patios and the little tables and chairs that are set up on the sidewalk outside of the coffee shops. I like nothing better than to amble down to the local Timothy's and take a coffee, cookie, and a book outside to watch people move up and down Yonge Street or Mount Pleasant. The mix of crisp spring air and coffee is simply wonderful.

Spring is the ultimate time for such indulgences. Winter makes it difficult to enjoy a coffee outdoors (I always spill on my gloves, which usually taste a bit like salt from the roads). Summer is too hot and sticky. Fall is nice, but you know that it is all coming to an end only too soon. The first cup of coffee outside in the spring is full of the promise of new beginnings.

Every year, when spring comes, I marvel about how much of life is mirrored in the changing of the seasons. Spring always comes, bringing with it new life and new possibilities. But there can be no new life without passing through death first. We appreciate and even savor spring in part because we have endured the long, dark months of winter.

Death and life

New growth is preceded by death. Seeds must die before they can bear a crop. Fields must lie fallow, resting beneath a blanket of frost in order to be recharged with the nutrients that make a good crop grow. Old leaves and dead flowers make excellent compost that can be used to bring new life to a lawn or garden. Death and life are intimately linked in nature and in the seasons. We cannot expect to live only in the spring. Spring would not be so lovely if we did not have to endure winter first. Then again, when winter is at its darkest, we have the hope that this season of death is not forever.

Modern culture would have us live permanently in the summer, when it is the warmest and the fruit has already grown and is ready to be eaten. We are encouraged to live in a season of play and to linger in the sunlight while avoiding the shadowy times and places. But be advised that this is stagnation. There is no growth nor is there hope of new possibilities. After a while, even the sunny days start to seem the same and boredom sets in.

Seasonal comfort

Take a lesson from nature: at some point, we must all move through a season of death. Death is inherent in the present world. We all traverse forms of death in our lives – physical, emotional, and spiritual deaths. Rather than deny these seasons or fear them, take another lesson from nature: these seasons of death will surely pass just as surely as each winter gives way to spring. Moreover, these seasons of death will bring new life and growth. Take comfort in the fact that the seeds of new beginnings lie buried deep within the darkest days of winter.

Spring puts a spring in my step. It is not just the birds or the fresh air. It is the eternal promise that life is stronger than death that I see played out each year in the seasons. It is the fact that God is so faithful, that he always allows spring to come. It is God's gentle spring reminder that we must die to live – but what a wonderful life we receive!

Onward Muslim Soldiers ... *continued from p. 5*

northern Africa, Spain, the Middle East and even into India. As Islam went through a long period of decline, jihad was de-emphasized, to be again revived with the rise of radical Islam in the modern era.

The contemporary branch of radical Islam can be traced to a number of influential leaders and organizations. One whose influence is dominant in Saudi Arabia was Sunni reformist Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdul al-Wahhab (1703-1792). He believed that Islam had fallen into severe decline because it had wandered from the purity and wholeness of its first three centuries. Consequently, he called the faithful back to the right path by stressing the absolute division between the followers of Allah and all the others, that is, the infidels.

The Saudi kingdom has used its immense oil-generated wealth to finance the spread of Wahhabism through a network of schools and mosques. By now there are thousands of mosques in Europe and North America where radical imams preach to the faithful that they must never become at home in their new homeland but that it is their duty to strive for making it into an Islamic country.

A major figure in the 20th century revival of radical Islam was the Egyptian Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), founder and spiritual guide of the Islamic extremist Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Banna is the author of a collection of key texts from the Koran and the Hadith (*Risalat al-Ma'thurat*).

He preached a message of revolt against the Western colonial powers, which he held responsible for the downtrodden Muslim world. This combination of anti-colonialism and Islamic jihad provided the fuel that has inspired large numbers of Muslim militant organizations, including Hamas, Hezbollah and Al Queda.

Al-Banna insisted that Muslims must wage war against Jews and Christians. He wrote: "In [Muslim] Tradition there is a clear indication of the obligation to fight the People of the Book [that is, Jews and Christians], and of the fact that God doubles the reward of those who fight them. Jihad is not against polytheists alone, but against all who do not embrace Islam."

The enemy within

Onward Muslim Soldiers provides a great deal of information about the authoritative Islamic scriptures, its major teachers throughout Islam's history, the real story of the cruel treatment of non-Muslims by means of a policy of discrimination and humiliation (dhimmitude), and in many cases death of the infidels.

The author faults the many Western academic and media experts who serve as apologists for the Islamic religion while whitewashing the actions of Muslim extremists. He names names and cites specific examples of willful ignorance and deliberate misrepresentations. One such historic event is the genocide committed by the Turkish Muslim government on the mostly Christian Armenians, beginning in 1894. Two more waves of large-scale murder and destruction followed in 1915-1916 and in 1922-1923, which killed 1.5 million people.

Spencer describes the many aggressive Muslim organizations in the U.S., which are politically astute in putting a positive slant to all information about Islam and its adherents. The Council on American Islamic Relations and the International Institute of Islamic Thought are two of the most vocal mouthpieces for Islam in the U.S. These organizations insist that jihad does not mean holy war but only refers to the personal struggles of believers within themselves. But then Spencer reports that they refuse to face up to the elements of radical Islam in the U.S. In fact, they treat all questions about the loyalty of American Muslims as evidence of "anti-Muslim bigotry."

When Spencer referred to Sheikh Muhammad Hisham Kabanni, an outspoken enemy of radical Islam, who has stated that eighty per cent of American mosques are controlled by extremists, CAIR representative Ibrahim Hooper called that a falsehood put out "by hate-mongers like Mr. Spencer."

Spencer cites specific examples of Islamic teachings within America that are intended to instill in students a hatred towards Christians and Jews. A text distributed in the U.S. by the Saudi-funded World Assembly of Muslim Youth states that "Judaism and Christianity are deviant religions." Another text warns that Muslims must not "associate with idolaters, deviants and the misguided" who are to "be hated and despised.... [The] Qur'an forbade taking Jews and Christians as friends, and that applies to every Jew and Christian, with no consideration as to whether they are at war with Islam or not."

Can we meet the challenge of militant Islam?

To a generation that does "not do God" in its politics, as famously remarked by a British advisor to Prime Minister Blair, radical Islam is a total mystery. They simply do not grasp that at the heart of Islam lies the conviction that the Koran is the latest and perfect revelation of God.

This premise leads to the conviction that Islam has the answers to all the questions about human existence. The militants take that to mean that all people must bow to Allah – by force if necessary. Al-Banna formulated this central doctrine of Islam as follows: "Islam is a faith and worship, a country and a citizenship, a religion and a state. It is a spirituality and hard work. It is a Qur'an and a sword."

Spencer is at his best when making his case on the basis of specific events and a careful analysis of the major Islamic texts, not only of the Koran and the Hadith but also of some of their most influential interpreters.

This book is a rich source of information about the words and actions of those who believe that it is their duty to "alter the social order of the whole world." The author convincingly shows that militant Islam is an enemy of freedom and justice, as those norms have been embodied in the best of Western tradition. (Regrettably, that tradition is now in serious decline, but that is another story.)

The good news is that this is not the entire story. For within Islam there is a segment of believers who fundamentally disagree with the militants who consider Osama bin Laden their spiritual leader and the perpetrators of 9/11 heroes and martyrs for a righteous cause. How this internal conflict within Islam will be resolved is hard to predict. But a great deal, for good or ill, rides on the outcome of this conflict.*

The widely respected authority on Islam, Bernard Lewis, has written extensively about the clash between Islam and the West. Furthermore, he has pointed out that there is also a clash within Islam itself between extremist Muslims and the moderates who want to live in peace and freedom. He concludes with this memorable observation:

One can only hope that, in time, the cause of freedom [within Islam] *will triumph once again as it has already triumphed over the Nazis and the Communists. If it does not, the outlook for the Islamic world, and perhaps for the West, will be grim.* (Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* p.165)

*It is highly significant, and encouraging, that a number of Spanish Muslim clerics issued a strongly-worded statement on March 11 in which they condemned Osama bin Laden as an apostate. They denounced the ongoing attacks on America, the West, Muslims and all innocent people as a "heinous crime and a mortal sin." This important document is available on the website of Free Muslims Against Terrorism.

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Catholic, Pentecostal, Mormon, Orthodox churches grow

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – Those belonging to Protestant churches described as "mainline" are dwindling in numbers while the rolls of Pentecostal churches, and some with mostly African American adherents and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) are growing, new figures show.

The 2005 *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches* published by the U.S. National Council of Churches (NCC), also reports growth in a number of U.S. Orthodox churches, including the Orthodox Church in America, which, with 1 million members, is now listed in the top 25 denominations in the United States.

A notable growth for the 2005 listings was in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with a reported membership of 5.5 million members, making it now the fourth largest denomination in the United States, up from fifth in the 2004 rankings. It experienced a growth rate of 1.71 per cent, the yearbook reported.

In all, three of the largest 25 churches in the United States are now Pentecostal, the NCC reported, while six are churches with predominantly African American members.

In releasing the latest numbers, the NCC said it was clear that mainline Protestants no longer dominate the list of the largest US churches. However, the Episcopal (Anglican) Church – which has been battered by internal debate over issues related to sexuality – did show a slight increase in membership, with 2.32 million members and a growth rate of 0.57 per cent.

Though the US remains a predominately Protestant country, the largest single denomination in the country remains the Roman Catholic Church, with 67.26 million members and a reported growth of 1.28 per cent, the NCC said.

The Southern Baptist Convention, the second-largest Christian denomination in the country and the largest single Protestant body in the United States, has 16.44 million members and a growth rate of 1.18 per cent, the yearbook reported.

The third largest denomination is the United Methodist Church, with a reported membership of 8.25 million members and a growth rate of 0.002 per cent.

Largest denominations in Canada and the U.S.

The following denominational ranking is from the 2005 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches

1. The Catholic Church – 67,259,768
2. Southern Baptist Convention – 16,439,603
3. The United Methodist Church – 8,251,175
4. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – 5,503,192
5. The Church of God in Christ – 5,449,875
6. National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. – 5,000,000
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – 4,984,925
8. National Baptist Convention of America, Inc. – 3,500,000
9. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – 3,241,309
10. Assemblies of God – 2,729,562
11. African Methodist Episcopal Church – 2,500,000
12. National Missionary Baptist Convention of America – 2,500,000
13. Progressive National Baptist Convention – 2,500,000
14. The Lutheran Church * Missouri Synod (LCMS) – 2,488,936
15. Episcopal Church – 2,320,221
16. Churches of Christ – 1,500,000
17. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – 1,500,000
18. Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. – 1,500,000
19. American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. – 1,433,075
20. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church – 1,432,795

Church

Empty pulpits, empowered members

A nation-wide shortage of clergy, in both Protestant and Catholic circles, is leaving churches without ministers and priests.

A recent issue of *Congregations* magazine shows the percentage of clergy 35 years old and under is at just four percent in the Episcopal Church and United Church of Christ, six percent in the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Roman Catholic Church, seven percent in the United Methodist Church and Presbyterian Church (USA), and 11 percent in the Southern Baptist Convention.

So, a Calvin College professor and her student research assistant decided to look at the issue – and look at what denominations are doing to empower the people in the pews to lead worship when their pulpit is vacant.

Shirley Roels is director of the Lilly Vocation project at Calvin College and a professor of management.

She and Calvin senior Kari Slotsema of Grand Rapids have just completed a survey of part-time and full-time staff, and lay leaders (the people in the pews) representing more than 45 church groups – evangelical and mainline, rural and urban, small and large – across the U.S. and Canada.

The survey, which was funded by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, asked respondents whether they were being trained to lead worship, and, if so, to describe their actual and preferred training.

The good news, says Roels, is that 63 percent of respondents got some training for leading worship.

"Paid staff got the most training," she says. "Those who get the least training are involved with children's or youth worship; the fine arts other than music; and technology. In other words, the least-trained worship leaders are the people who don't have the loudest voices in church."

Most respondents said they have a good working knowledge of the elements of worship, but need help to manage and motivate others. They also would like training on incorporating media and diversity in worship.

Slotsema says there were few differences between Protestant and Catholic respondents although the Catholics tended to receive more training and said it was more effective than Protestants reported.

Church age (how long a congregation has been established) actually led to more differences than denomination.

Says Slotsema: "Churches under 10 years old have more lay leaders, and these lay leaders often go outside their denomination for training. The older a church is, the more likely that a significant majority get trained by their denomination and that the training is professional. Also the older the church gets, the more full-time employees it has, and the less part-time volunteers. This may show that the older churches are more stable and have the money to pay for staff, where younger churches must rely on volunteers. This creates an important difference that must be addressed in the way the individuals are trained."

Roels says the issue of training lay leaders is only going to grow. The percentage of clergy age 35 and under is dropping, she says, and seminaries enroll smaller classes than they did 25 years ago. In addition in the next decade, a large percentage of pastors will retire.

"In my own denomination, the Christian Reformed Church of North America, about one in eight congregations has no pastor," she says. "But this is a nationwide issue, reported by Catholics and every Protestant group."

For a graphic representation of survey results see www.calvin.edu/worship/survey/results.ppt

Churches decry Easter Sunday shooting at Pakistan Christians

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) – Church officials in Pakistan say the firing on a Christian congregation during Easter Sunday that killed one worshipper and injured seven others shows the vulnerability of the Christian community in the Muslim-majority nation.

Armed assailants fired bullets at the Christians on Easter Sunday when about 50 worshipers in Khahamba village near Lahore were leaving a service at the New Apostolic Church in the locality.

"This [attack] shows the vulnerability of the Christian community," said Sohail Aktar, spokesperson for the National Council of Churches of Pakistan, which groups four major Protestant churches in the south Asian country.

Speaking to ENI from the church grouping's office in Lahore, Aktar said the latest attack on the Christians "reinforces our helplessness." He noted, "If we try to resist them, things become very difficult for us."

More than 95 per cent of the 141 million people of Pakistan are Muslims, while Christians number just over three million with Hindus and traditional believers accounting for the rest of the population.

Half a dozen major shooting incidents on church targets in Pakistan have claimed the lives of more than 36 Christians since October 2001 when the US and its allies launched military action in neighboring Afghanistan.

Wasim Mundizar of the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance & Settlement, a Christian social action group, which made an on-the-spot study of the attack, said the majority Muslims in the village were "demanding the return of land their Muslim ancestors had donated decades back" to landless Christians who are mostly illiterate and survive by carrying out menial jobs.

"But the Christians refused to return the land where they have built a church and also have their cemetery," said Mundizar, who visited the site of the shooting.

Quoting victims being treated in hospital, Mundizar said that the shoot-out was carried out by the people who had been in the forefront of the dispute with the Christians demanding the land. Police have arrested four people in connection with the attack and confiscated assault weapons.

"This is another instance of the overall discrimination and intolerance against the non-Muslims here," lamented Samson Joseph, of the Roman Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Pakistan. "The majority [community] finds it difficult to accept us and wants to always dominate and dictate terms to us."

The new face of Christianity

Phil de Haan

In 1900 there were about nine million Christians in all of Africa. By the year 2000 that number had grown to 380 million.

Calvin College provost and professor of history Joel Carpenter says that Africa is home to the greatest growth of Christianity in the world right now.

He and Lamin Sanneh, D. Willis James professor of missions & world Christianity at Yale Divinity School, are editors of a new book on the topic from Oxford University Press called *The Changing Face of Christianity.*

"It is in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Oceana that Christianity is flourishing," says Carpenter. "In the global north – North America and Europe especially – the religion is barely holding its own. In addition the shape that Christianity takes in the global south and east is markedly different from how it looks in the north."

Indeed Sanneh, a West African Christian, says in the book's conclusion that northern, liberal Christianity has become a "do-as-you-please" religion, deeply accommodated to the post-Christian values of the secular northlands. And, he adds, the new Christianity of the global south and east, which bears the scars of hardship and persecution, will clash increasingly with its urbane and worldly northern counterpart.

That's because outside the North Atlantic region Christianity is much more dynamic and is marked by communal relationships and mutual obligations. Christianity in the north, says Carpenter, tends to be much more individualistic. In addition, Carpenter asserts that Christianity in the global south and east may be closer to classic Christian doctrines and imperatives than in the north where it has assumed modern, post-Christian cultural norms.

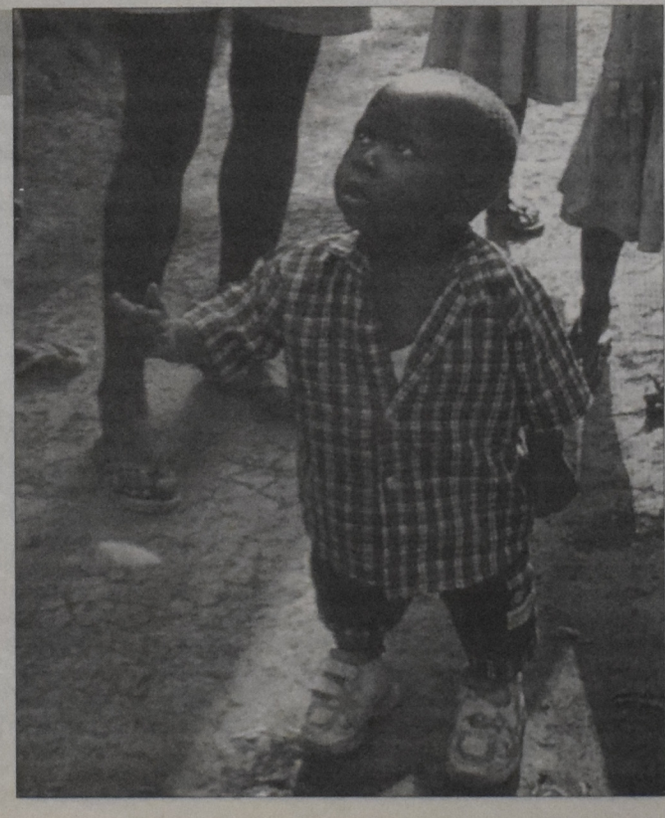
Carpenter believes that the Roman Catholic Church is probably more profoundly impacted by the rise of Christianity in the global south than any other religion.

"About 40 percent of the College of Cardinals," he notes, "comes from the global south and east. The new story there is Africa. All of these former British colonies are no longer primarily identified with the Church of England. The Catholic church is just taking off in places like Uganda and Nigeria."

So much so, says Carpenter, that he believes some day we will see an African pope.

"Then," he says, "you'll have a very visible reminder of the changing face of Christianity."

For more on this story see: http://www.calvin.edu/news/releases/2004_05/changing_face.htm



Remembrance

"Blessed are the peacemakers"

Supt. Ralph L. de Groot RCMP (Ret)

And so we have laid them to rest. The moving National Memorial Service in Edmonton is over. I was not there. The RCMP Veterans Association in Toronto, to which I belong, was represented. I have been to quite a few others, but in my service have never witnessed one of this scope and size.

The thousands in attendance have returned home. The national outpouring of grief and shock is now a matter of history. To be sure, the four young RCMP constables will be remembered and the tragedy recalled and commented on from time to time. Their families will continue to suffer the loss of their loved ones for years to come. Small-town Mayerthorpe will now most likely remain on the map forever identified with this terrible event.

There is no need to go over all details. You have heard and read them all. The media coverage was thorough. Most of it balanced, some of it less so. Their coverage of the memorial service was outstanding. Yet so many questions remain. What went wrong? How could something like this happen? Why did it happen? What does it all mean? Frankly, I don't have the answers. More simply put: I don't know.

I was asked to share some personal thoughts, feelings and emotions. I am not at all sure that I can do that and be understood. I have never before tried to put such feelings into printed words, even though I have occasionally written a little about other things. Police officers are willing to talk about a lot of things in public. Some thoughts are only shared with other police colleagues.

The Force

On the inside, we hardly ever refer to the RCMP. It is most always "the Force." But the Force is too big an entity; it is somewhat impersonal. You can't put a face on it. You know all about it but when you are junior it is difficult to identify with the whole of it. After all, how does one identify with 23,000 other members? That much narrower focus begins in the Academy – "Depot," as we call it. It's in Regina. There it is – your troop of 32 recruits. That is the face of the Force that you can see. The bond created in your graduating troop is for life. Some will not have made it; a very few will have left of their own accord because they couldn't be what the Force intended them to become. Back in 57-58, if the instructors didn't make a man out of you, the horses would. The training was tough.

Other troops – in my case there were 10 of them in 1957 – mattered but not quite in the same way as your own troop. Headquarters in Ottawa was for recruits just a far-away "puzzle palace." As you gain higher rank and do one or more tours of duty there, you learn to think differently.

After graduating from the Academy, you add your first detachment to that bond. Perhaps it is a small one of four or five members.

As you get on with your career and with transfers, these bonds keep growing. Taken together, it constitutes and operates like a large family and somewhere along the line you know that the Force is indeed your family. It takes second place only after you marry. They have a fancy word for it. It is called esprit de corps. The dictionary may define it but it can never capture what it means in your heart, in your very being.

When you marry, your spouse is adopted by that family, and so are your children. It is a world all to its own. It is mutually supportive, it is warm and inviting, it's comfortable. We look after our own. Some on the outside refer to this as a brotherhood. I have seldom heard the word used inside the Force but I understand the meaning and don't object to it.

That police world keeps on growing. In just a short time, there is transference of this sense of family to include all other police officers and their immediate families, regardless of departmental affiliation.

Shared experience

Based on my own domestic and international experience of close to 35 years, I can say the bond I have been talking about knows no national borders. At the moment two police officers meet, they are strangers no longer. This bond is truly global. It is also largely closed to outsiders in respect of certain matters: your fears, your emotions, your inner thoughts about your work and the evil you encounter. When you are junior and still single, you may perhaps share them with your father on a visit home, but never with your mother because mothers are worrywarts.

After you're married, you may confide in your good spouse, but only on a limited basis because you try not to bring the job home. You especially shield your young children. It is hard enough as it is growing up with a police officer as father. You also don't disclose your deepest thoughts in the community because they depend on you and trust you to be able to handle all things. Your support mechanism is that police family.

Church remains important to you. It helps you with your personal faith. But when you are young, you do struggle a bit taking the message of Sunday to your real world of Monday. You tend to keep such thoughts to yourself.

You do, of course, give of yourself, especially to the community you are stationed in at a particular point in time. You become part of it and they become part of you. But you keep some things to yourself. And if your walk in your professional and personal life is half decent, you gain respect, sincere respect. There is no greater satisfier. Your reputation walks with you into the court room where you spend a lot of time, especially in the early years. You can gain that respect from both the bad and good people you encounter. You have to earn it by how you treat others. And when you do it well, many of the good people will turn respect into an intense feeling of deep affection or fondness. One can't really see it or touch it but you know when you are on the receiving end of it.

Big city policing is somewhat different and perhaps somewhat more impersonal in terms of feeling part of the whole city community. I have always thought their job is therefore more difficult.

Hooked for life

Much later, when through good fortune and promotions you have gained higher rank and command others, you will often think back to those earlier days, your junior years spent in those smaller settings. They were happy days. All that mattered was the job, except you never thought of it as just a job. It was much more than that. It was your dream come true and you could live it each and every day; yes, and many nights – frequently all night. And you gladly volunteered even on a day off. Idealistic? Naïve? Most certainly so! How wonderful it was to be that way. And they even paid you for it!

And now the rub: if these feelings, this attitude, these sentiments are still with you, say, after some five years, you are hooked for life. If they are not, you will have left the Force by that time.

Regardless of transfers, new duties, greater responsibilities, a broader vision, you keep feeling the same way right up to the day you retire and thereafter. You do not really ever leave the Force.

Was or is it that way in other workplaces? I don't know. I can't know. I have had no other career.

Routine assignment

I did not know the four members. I had never heard of their names. I had never before seen their young faces until the photos. Yet I am going to say that I knew them and knew them well. While I can't read minds, I really believe I know their state of mind on that fateful day and the days before.

They considered their assigned duty routine. The assignment was nothing special. That's simply what junior constables do. They would have known the suspect's name, reputation and his criminal history. But that would not have bothered them. Why not? Every small rural detachment has one or two real hoods living in the jurisdiction. It comes with the territory. All four possessed confidence that is hard to put into words. Not irresponsible over-confidence mind you, but self-confidence; cautious, to be sure, but no undue alarm.

When they left the Academy, they felt tall, they walked tall. They were doing what they always hoped they would be doing. They understood risk – that had been drilled into them – but they didn't dwell on that. They were living their dream even while engaged in routine duties. That is what police work is: days, weeks, even months of routine. Most of the time, the work is pleasant routine. Occasionally it can be a bit boring.

Then, without warning, there is that encounter evoking outright fear, even terror. You do not even realize it at the time. You find yourself reacting on trained instinct. When it's over, you are surprised at yourself. True enough, your hands or knees may be shaking a bit, but only afterwards, not during. Usually that means being involved in violence but not necessarily with firearms.

What I can say is this: these more stressful thoughts are only infrequently on your mind. You don't think about them. You don't dwell on them. I dare say these

Spirituality

thoughts were not on the minds of constables watching and later approaching what they believed to be an unattended barn in the countryside, regardless of the owner's reputation.

What must now be left to investigative findings are the other circumstances. Believe me when I say that it will be the most thorough post-incident investigation ever conducted, given the horrible four murders involved. This is not the time to speculate or engage in second-guessing.

Their state of mind was professional. The long hours would have included brief moments of thoughts about completely unrelated things, unrelated to the job at hand that is. These mental flashes may well have included family; humor; love; a religious thought; a planned activity; some personal task they forgot to do or one to remember doing right after going off duty; you name it. And when it was time to act, they put it all aside and concentrated on what they were about to do. Their adrenalin would most likely have increased that concentration. It is a healthy add-on. Stress is good. Only miss-managed stress leads to distress.

And then the shots rang out and these fine men were no more….

Flashback

How did I react to the news? Let me put it this way. At the moment I first heard it, I did not jump up and slam the table or loose my cool. Rather, my first reaction was one of unbelief. This can't be true. Police officers do not always accept media reports automatically. This one was beyond belief. So there was some initial skepticism, but only briefly, because the almost immediate confirmation was overwhelming. My next thought was 'Terry all over again.' You don't know Terry. I wish you did. Police officers have a tendency to experience flashbacks when they encounter disaster that affects them personally.

Terry was Regimental Number 20307, Cst. John Terrence Hoey, my troop mate in 1957-58 in Regina. He was from Peterborough. 30 out of our 32 graduated. Eight of us were sent out east on October 10, 1958, boarding CNR train #6. Seven bound for Newfoundland, I for Nova Scotia. We were in full red serge. How proud we were. A couple or so days later, the train arrived in Truro. My seven troop mates had to switch trains for Sydney and the ferry. I was left alone to continue to Halifax. I recall saying so long to the others and Terry. There was a bit of manly hugging. What I didn't tell you was that just an hour or so before, Terry and I had been talking. He disclosed that he had this uneasy feeling that he would never see Ontario again. We both passed it off.

The next day, headquarters in Halifax sent me back to Truro. That was to be my first posting.

Just a few short weeks later, Terry's casket took the same journey in reverse. His body was being returned to Peterborough, via Truro. Terry had been shot and killed in Botwood, Newfoundland, on November 7th, 1958, three days short of a month after leaving training. The murderer committed suicide after he fired at Terry through the closed door in front of which Terry had been standing. Terry is buried at St. Peter's Cemetery on Monaghan Road here in Peterborough, Block 55, Lot 11, Grave #4. Terry stayed with me throughout my entire career. He was there when I got married. He was there when my children were born. He was there at all my promotions. So many blessings for me and the thought was always the same: none for Terry, he missed all that – dead at 21 years of age.

He was a devout Roman Catholic. In Regina I even

See **Peacemakers**, *page 15...*

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

The apostle and the lama

Last month I wrote about how we as Christians sometimes try to solve our problems by "bypassing" ourselves and focusing instead on our spiritual practices to help us out of our difficulties. While I acknowledged our hope lies in God, I believe we sometimes expect him to provide quick fixes for our personal dilemmas. I suggested we short-change ourselves when we do not integrate our faith into our everyday life that allows for healthy emotional and spiritual growth.

"Sonny" the apostle

A good example of "spiritual bypassing" in full swing is Reverend Sonny Dewey played by Robert Duval in the film *The Apostle* released in 1997. The story is set in rural Texas in the 1980's. The opening scene has Sonny, driving with his aging mother, coming upon a multi-vehicle accident. The Reverend slips past the state troopers and whispers passionately to a bloody and semiconscious young man (whose girlfriend is lying dead beside him) and urges him to invite Jesus into his heart right now so his sins will be forgiven and he can enter into heaven this very day. When the state trooper tries to pull Sonny away from the vehicle and the wounded driver, Sonny pushes him away and continues to lead the dying man to Christ. When he gets back into his car he tells his mother about the good work God has just done.

At the same time, all is not well with Sonny at home and at church. His wife is worn out from him being on the road leading revivals and his ongoing adulteries. She becomes involved with a youth pastor and church politics eventually leaves Sonny without a congregation. She also demands a marital separation. Sonny gets drunk and in his rage attacks the youth pastor with a baseball bat. The youth pastor eventually dies as a result. Sonny laments to God that he does not know what to do and reminds him that he has been a good and faithful servant for many years. Eventually, he decides to leave town and develop a new identity.

The rest of the film is about Sonny's infectious spiritual passion as he works multiple jobs in order to renovate and rejuvenate a dilapidated and closed church building. He also fixes up a used bus and starts a radio ministry. The church grows and people seem to come to Christ. His congregation loves Sonny's zeal and emotional preaching. At times he feels sad because he misses his children and his dying mother.

Nevertheless, he continues to get into trouble. He becomes involved with another woman and gets into a fistfight with someone who questions his integrity. Eventually, his past catches up with him and he is sent to jail. In prison, he continues to lead a chain gang in Christian song so that they may also know of the powerful Jesus who changes lives.

Tashi, the lama

Another example of "spiritual bypassing" is evident in the more recent film *Samsara*. Here Tashi, played by Shawn Ku, is a brilliant young lama who has just finished three years of solitary meditation in a remote hermitage in search of enlightenment. The film is shot entirely on location in Ladakh, a remote region of India in the majestic Himalayas with vistas of white tipped mountains, barren deserts and tranquil waters.

Tashi's return to the monastery, however, has unexpected results. Despite a life devoted to the rigours of spiritual practices, he finds himself experiencing a sexual awakening. These feelings coincide with his journey to a village to perform a harvest blessing. There he is drawn to a beautiful village woman. Consequently, Tashi begins to question the spiritual values of his monastic existence. He laments to the leading monk, that he has lived a strict spiritual life since the age of five and that Buddha himself had 29 years in the world. He suggests Buddha's enlightenment could have been in response to him having been in the world for all those years.

Eventually, he is given a choice and he leaves the monastery so he can make an informed decision about renouncing the world. Soon he becomes involved in the rhythms of marital, family and village life. There he discovers love, lust, swindling, betrayal, fatherhood, confrontation, passion and misery. He becomes confused and disappointed with himself.

And so, Tashi decides to journey back to the monastery. After a ritual washing in a stream and again wearing his monk's robes he approaches a stone wall within sight of the monastery and finds someone waiting for him. This scene is almost sublime as this person gives him a unique perspective and an in-depth understanding on what spirituality is actually about (which I will not give away). This revelation turns Tashi's world upside down and he abandons himself to shameful and bitter tears.

Integrating emotional and spiritual life

When we critique films of faith we are often tempted to dig into the *content* of the religions portrayed – in this case Christianity and Buddhism. I will, however, only focus on the characters' *process* (emotions, thoughts and behaviors) in terms of their relationship to themselves and those around them. Both films give us a glimpse into the spiritual and emotional development of the main characters. Yet, there are major differences between the two.

In regards to *The Apostle*, some critics believe Sonny's efforts in establishing a new congregation symbolizes his redemption. I do not agree. Sonny is the expert in "spiritual bypassing." He leaves town because he does not want to be accountable. Over time he misses his children and his dying mother but not enough to face the consequences of his actions. Furthermore, Sonny does not hesitate to become involved with another woman and does not shy away from a violent confrontation with a disgruntled individual. In short, he enjoys his position of power. Eventually, he realizes his days are numbered but he hangs on to his happy Jesus mask. The last scene of him leading a chain gang of prisoners in song is simply more of the same. There is no indication of Sonny coming to a place of intense personal sorrow and brokenness.

The main character in "*Samsara,*" on the other hand, is somewhat different. While Tashi is naïve about himself and the ways of the world, he is instinctively a man of integrity who eventually becomes seriously disappointed with his own behavior. At the same time, he does try to "bypass" himself by going back to the monastery and renouncing the world. However, the person who is waiting for him by the stone wall, challenges him to take a strong look at himself. And so, Tashi finally sees himself as he really is and breaks down as a consequence. Through his suffering he gains a deeper understanding of himself as well as his spiritual path and learns it is not the rigours of spiritual practices that will bring him enlightenment but that ultimately *all levels of life* play a role in the development of his (and our) spirituality.

(Last instalment on "spiritual bypassing" next month).

Arlene Van Hove is on sabbatical from Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Cuban kaleidoscope

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Jaguey Grande. Agramonte. Before I left on a mission trip from March 7-21 with 16 other people from Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, these names were simply lyrical-sounding labels for unfamiliar towns in the province of Matanzas, Cuba. That soon changed as each day our group traveled between Jaguey Grande – where the headquarters of the Iglesia Cristiana Reformada en Cuba (the CRC in Cuba) is located and where we stayed – and Agramonte, a half-hour drive away where we refurbished the La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada de Agramonte. When I returned to Canada, a kaleidoscope of images encountered in these places – friendly people, dilapidated buildings, billboards of Fidel Castro, vibrant worship, roaming dogs, tropical foliage, myriad forms of transportation, and much more – tumbled though my tired, over-stimulated mind.

One of my initial impressions of Cuba, besides the sight through my airplane window of the first real palm trees I ever saw, was the seizure by customs officials of some of the humanitarian aid our group had brought with us, provided by Dr. Ken Taylor, a St. Catharines doctor. Besides medical supplies, some of us lugged along suitcases filled with eye glasses. We carried letters from both the doctor and the president of the CRC in Cuba, Rev. David Lee, clearly stating that the supplies were destined for the regional hospital in Jaquey Grande. Frustrated, I watched as the customs officials emptied the badly-needed glasses into large cloth bags and sent us on our way. The excitement I had felt about bringing something from Canada to people who really needed it turned to disappointment.

Though a week later Rev. Lee and our pastor, Rev. James Dekker, returned to Havana to persuade officials to release the goods, they were unsuccessful. However, further attempts will be made at a later date.

Agramonte CRC in Agramonte, Cuba after it was refurbished PAULINE DRENTH PHOTO

Meals-on-wheels

La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada de Agramonte was chosen as the site for our service project because, according to Rev. David Lee, "it has developed a highly public and appreciated ministry of feeding nutritious meals to seniors and of visiting seniors from the community." In 1996 Christians in Agramonte noted that seniors in their area were going hungry. They wanted to establish a meals-on-wheels program to alleviate the need, but initially they met with resistance from the communist government whose task it was to care for the needs of its citizens. Though the government finally gave permission, it expected the project to fail. But it didn't. At its inception the program fed approximately 75 people. Now it feeds a much smaller group of 30 because of lack of funds. A long waiting list testifies to the continuing need in the community.

Meals are prepared by a crew of dedicated women and one man in a kitchen adjoining the church. Food is dished into metal canisters, which are placed in a wagon attached to a bike. Someone from the church community pedals through the streets, delivering the meals to registered seniors. Several of the participating seniors who are still able walk to the church to pick up their meals so they can have interaction with others.

La Iglesia Cristiana Reformada de Agramonte, built ten years ago, looked tired and worn when we arrived. Our group, along with enthusiastic Christians from the congregation – whom we quickly grew to love – painted the dining hall, the sanctuary, four classrooms, wrought iron bars, fences, the parsonage, the bathrooms, and the outside walls of the complex. Also, the bathrooms were upgraded as walls between the toilets and showers were extended with sandstone bricks.

The quarry

One morning, on our way to work, we took a detour over bumpy country roads to a sandstone quarry where slabs are hewn, not with the help of machines, but by sheer back-breaking manual labor. In the glaring heat, lean men sawed into the white sandstone with long jagged-toothed saws – moving back and forth, back and forth – until it seemed their arms would give way from exhaustion. Some had set up shields from the sun, two long poles attached in a cross and covered with a sack. The structures hardly seemed adequate to ward off the sun's intensity, which in the early morning already threatened to burn my skin.

The quarry, punctuated by jutting sections where no human hand could wield a saw through unrelenting stone, seemed like a scene from another time. For the remainder of our stay in Cuba, as I viewed the many simple homes, I reminded myself that each building block had cost a person hours of work. Any critical thoughts I'd initially had about building blocks that were slightly uneven or walls that were crooked were dispelled by admiration for the men who eked out an existence in the quarries.

Personal initiative

Despite the fact that Cuba is a communist state, personal initiative is evident. When we drove from Havana along a major highway to Jaguey Grande, men stood along the side of the road displaying long strands of garlic or onions for sale. Later in the week as I painted the outside walls of the church, vendors peddled their wares, things like lettuce or artificial flowers.

One of the young Christian men we met produced soft drinks in his parents' home. When I asked him to explain to me how his family made the soft drinks which they sold in their community, his face beamed at the chance to tell me about his work. He returned later with an explanation outlining the procedure on a piece of paper: "We get a full measure of orange essence and we add coloring, sugar water, and citric acid. We shake it all together and we get the extract. We have a small barrel where we put a certain amount of ice and then we fill it with water. Afterwards, we add CO2 and shake it till we obtain sparkling water. Then we fill the bottles with that water."

Perhaps my most striking experience of a business in Cuba was the "ice cream parlor" I visited one evening. Located in someone's home, patrons walked into the family living room to order – into the space where the family was relaxing and watching television. Needless to say, my Canadian sense of the importance of privacy was jarred by this unseemly invasion. Of course, it wasn't an invasion, but a welcome intrusion which boded well for the family's business.

CRC headquarters in Jaguey Grande, Cuba PAULINE DRENTH PHOTO

Sonya with several new friends in front of Agramonte CRC before it was refurbished DAN BAARDA PHOTO

KAREN FULMER PHOTO

Sonya with Henrietta Hunse and Pauline Drenth at Terry Fox Run for the Cure, Jaguey Grande, Cuba

A touch of Canada

Cuba held other surprises as well. One Saturday we noticed a poster written in Spanish promoting a distinctly Canadian event, the Terry Fox Run for the Cure. Though we all laughed at the incongruity of discovering that Cubans hosted an event with Canadian roots, we didn't think about it again that day.

On Sunday morning, as several women and I approached Jaguey Grande's town square, we saw a police car parked by the road. Several police officers stood nearby as someone yelled into a loudspeaker. Convinced that we had stumbled on a political rally, we each quickly checked that we had our necessary documents – copies of our passport and of our religious visitors' visas.

Statue of Christ in Havana

PAULINE DRENTH PHOTO

We walked past the police and decided to go to the far end of the square where we could watch and try to discover what was happening.

Suddenly I noticed a woman carrying a donation box with Terry Fox's name printed on it in large letters. We had stumbled on the Terry Fox Run for the Cure! We gave her some pesos and tried to explain that we were Canadians just like Terry Fox had been. Running to the starting line, we watched as old ladies with canes, enthusiastic young children, men on bikes, and ambling teenagers took off. When someone beckoned for us to join the procession, we merged into the energetic crowd.

At home with strangers

Being in Cuba, with its unfamiliar language, food, political structure, economy, bureaucracy and architecture, reminded me of what it feels like to be a stranger. However, in one place – the churches we visited – I didn't feel like a foreigner. While there I immediately recognized that I belonged to the same body as my Cuban Christian brothers and sisters. Their faces revealed Christ as they sang, prayed, hugged each other, and ate together. Their body language communicated our Lord's presence as we worked alongside each other. Their hospitality – offered with the words "My home is your home" – exhibited the open arms of God.

When our group left Cuba, we stopped at the statue of Christ which overlooks the Havana harbor. Castro's government allows the massive marble structure to remain standing only because of its artistic and historical value. No credence is given to its religious significance. The government isn't concerned about a "dead" Christ. It puts its faith in its own leader. As one Cuban man told a member of our group, "Castro is the Christ of Cuba!"

But of course, Castro isn't!

Jesus is the Christ – of Cuba, of Canada, of the world. He's coming again, and all the nations of the world will bow before him!

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Mud-life crisis

I took a deep breath and rubbed my weary eyes. I'd been staring at the computer screen for a couple of hours and now the afternoon sunshine beckoned me to take a break outdoors.

Rocky pranced along beside me down the blind side road that borders our farm. He paused at the usual spot and waited to be unleashed. The sap buckets clanged against the maple trees in the east wind. I pulled up the hood of my jacket and regretted not bringing my mittens. Rocky meandered through the patches of snow and mud, sniffing and snooping along the fence row.

I jammed my hands into my pockets and thought about the article I was working on. My mind shifted to the *Christian Courier* column that was due shortly, and I realized I had no thoughts on what to write about. One lonely idea rattled through my head and it was deadly serious, almost preachy. "Dear God," I murmured, "Please give me a story to tell."

My prayer was interrupted by the unmistakable din of Canada Geese down by the creek. Rocky's ears perked up at their squawking and he bolted off for his daily wild goose chase. From the crest of the hill I watched him bounding through the flooded section of the field along the river bank. A mixture of snow and water splattered in his wake. He could barely squeeze out a "woof" now and then as he focused all his energy into each stride.

The ruckus from the geese faded into the distance and Rocky turned to come back. Suddenly an entire flock of ducks exploded into flight from a nearby pond. Startled by the frenzy it took him a second to give chase and before I knew it he had crossed the neighbor's field and disappeared into the bush.

I stood on top of the hill and scanned the landscape for my collie. No sign of him. The wind stifled my voice when I called. I tried to whistle, but my lips were dry from the cold. Between me and the bush lay a plowed field. Harriston loam is rich, heavy soil. In the early spring the ground is still frozen and the topsoil becomes saturated with runoff from the snow, giving it the consistency of quicksand. I've spent more than half my life on the farm. I know this stuff. Looking down at my heavy rubber hunting boots, I figured maybe I could step from the crown of one furrow to the next and head for the grass walkway on the far side of the field.

The plan went fairly well until I was about three-quarters of the way across. Mud collected on my boots and they felt like cement blocks on my feet. I stepped gingerly onto a rock and slid off the side, losing my balance. My other foot landed with a squishy sound in the bottom of a watery furrow and sank in over my ankle. Repositioning my right foot I tried to free myself, but to no avail. Finally I yanked with all my might and lurched forward with a jerk, landing on my knees and breaking the fall with my hands.

Thankful that no one could see me, I stood up and tried to wipe off the muck. My jeans stuck to my legs, wet and heavy with mud. Both of my feet were now buried in the mire. Only the tops of my boots were visible. I felt like a kid in a Tide commercial.

Rocky emerged from the bush and stood at the edge of the field, wagging his tail. He seemed to find it all very amusing. I suggested he go get help. He opted to return to his duck hunt instead. Too bad he only looks like Lassie.

I struggled for a few minutes, but squirming only made matters worse. Finally I pulled my feet out of my boots, stripped off my socks and began walking barefoot through the field. The cold sludge oozed around my ankles, each step accompanied by a vulgar sucking sound. I sloshed through an icy ditch, over a snow bank and finally stood on the soggy grass pathway.

Jack was working behind the barn when I got home. His jaw dropped at the sight of my bare feet.

He made coffee while I cleaned up. Massaging my aching feet he said, "Guess you've got something to write about."

"How many columns can I write about the stupid things I do? What will people think?" I asked.

"Don't worry," he assured me, "People can relate. Everybody does dumb stuff." A grin spread across his face and he added, "Of course, most people do them when they're kids."

So that's my story. I could spiritualize it for you, but whenever I'm tempted to take myself too seriously, I just picture those boots still out there in the field. That stops me dead in my tracks, so to speak.

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A philosophy of history?

A. A. Van Ruler

He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (KJV)

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NIV)

The Preacher is still wrestling with the fact that in life, whether of the world or of man, first one thing happens and then the opposite. This gives things multiplicity and variety, but it also creates division and contradiction. It all happens at the same time. In summary, he makes three comments on this state of affairs.

First, God has made everything beautiful in its time. This beauty, thus, depends upon the appearance of things in their time, with each having its own point in time. Reality consists of an endless series of such points. All things are spread out over these points in their endless multiplicity and contradictions.

The amazing thing, however, is that they do all appear at their own point in time. Things fit together like a picture puzzle. At first a puzzle, too, consists of a disorganized mass of different pieces. But to everyone's amazement, it seems that they all fit alongside and into one another. In the end, together they form a beautiful whole.

The Preacher describes this beauty with a word that may be translated as "excellent." The Lord God himself is the one who puts the puzzle together. And he puts it together in reality. Things do in fact fit together. So reality is, in fact, one large coherent whole. It contains an inconceivable multiplicity, and also almost unbearable contradictions. But obviously the contradictions are not wholly unbearable and the multiplicity is not wholly inconceivable.

At least, the world is still here. Apparently it is possible for it to exist; it is a unity; it exists and goes its own way.

God assembles the puzzle in reality. He has made everything "excellent" in its time.

This is, in a way, an even more powerful expression than the passage in Genesis 1:31, which says, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good." This passage is about the beginning, about things in their primeval state.

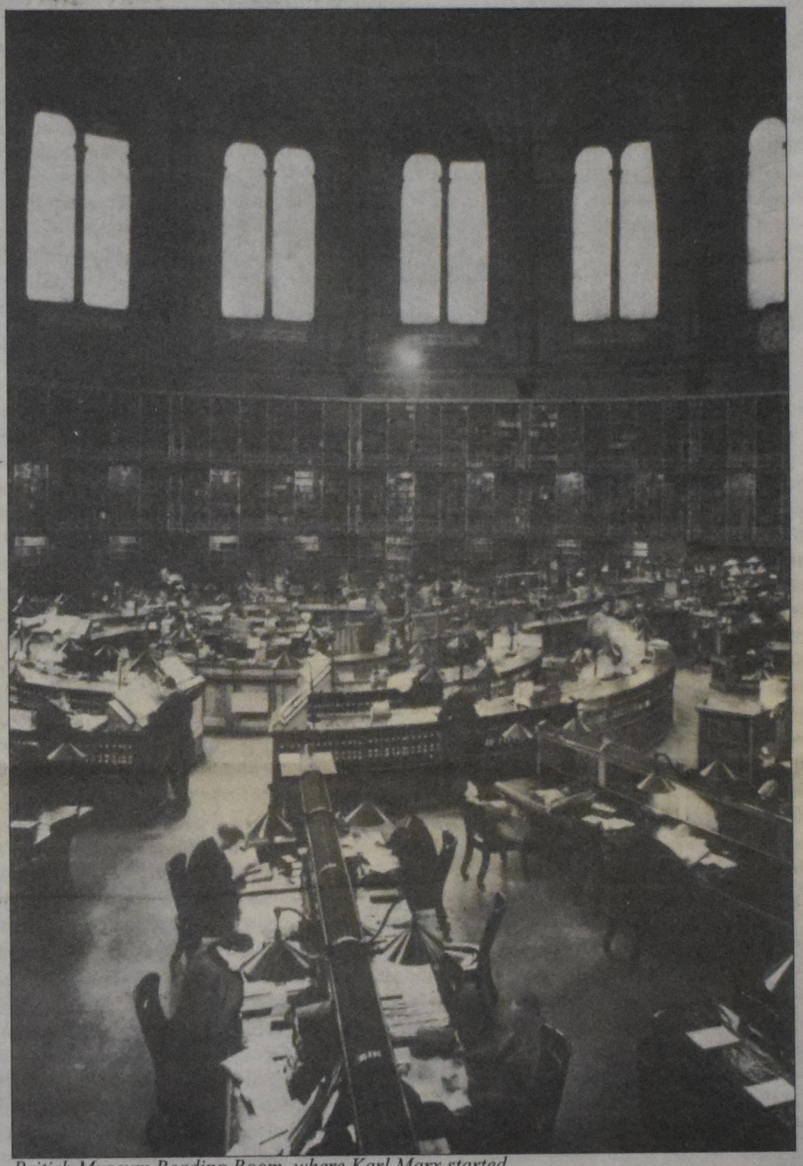
If we put our hearts and minds to it, we might perhaps be able to affirm that indeed that was a "good" undertaking. Being is better than non-being.

The Preacher, however, does not stand at the beginning. He stands in the middle of time. Moreover, he is not just talking strictly about being. He is also talking about everything that happens in history. And about this, too, he says that it is all very good.

There is beauty in reality as it happens. In spite of the multiplicity and divisions, it is still beautiful.

In the second place, the Preacher adds, it is not only true that reality happens and God is still busy, but the Lord God has also planted eternity in man's heart.

This "eternity" is not eternity in the sense of a non-temporal or super-temporal reality. This eternity is rather the fullness of temporal reality – everything that happens between the beginning and the end, the entire historical process, not just of a single human life, but of the history of the generations of men, and the life of nature and of the universe. All this the Lord God has planted in the heart of man.



British Museum Reading Room, where Karl Marx started

It is our nature to reflect on it. We focus our attention on it. And we possess the capacity to do so. That is part of our humanity. Animals, plants, and things are just pieces of the picture puzzle. They permit themselves to be placed into the larger whole. They cannot look beyond their own boundaries.

But as human beings we stand in the present. We stand there, in a manner of speaking, above the stream of time. In our memory, we have knowledge of the past. In our expectations, we have an awareness of the future. We oversee the whole, not just over the length of time but also over the breadth of space. We attempt to tie things together. We form for ourselves an image of the whole.

This is a wonderful faculty that we possess. Not that we are able to assemble the picture puzzle ourselves. But we look over the Lord God's shoulder in amazement as he is busy putting the pieces together. We attempt to discern something of the large picture that is emerging. We attempt to create a philosophy (or theology) of history.

This endeavor is no arrogance on the part of man. The Preacher maintains that this also is God's intention. He has placed eternity in man's heart. Man is a spectator of God in the theatrum gloriae Dei (theater of God's glory) in this world as the showplace of God's immeasurable glory. We must pick out the roles that God presents. It is a huge drama or comedy. We must discern the central plot of the drama in order to understand how each part fits beautifully into the whole.

This is man's position. As a spectator he automatically becomes an applauder. Man is a praise-giver and a God-speaker. This praising and speaking passes over into doing and laboring. Man is also God's fellow-laborer, God's co-star in his comedy.

Everything depends upon our having a philosophy or theology of history. In this the Communists are, biblically speaking, doubtlessly correct. They claim to know with the help of science the absolute meaning of the historical process. This absolute meaning is determined by the one political party and is then forcibly implemented in society by the state and imposed on the hearts and minds of the people. The Communists, however, forget one thing, says the Preacher. Although God has placed eternity in the heart of man, man is still not able to uncover the work that God does from beginning to end.

This is the third point that the Preacher makes in his summary. One could respond: that is all pretty obvious. The drama, after all, is not finished yet. Reality is not yet completed. The end is not yet here. The puzzle has not yet been put together in its entirety. Therefore, although we can peer attentively over God's shoulder, we do not yet see the total picture.

But this is, to my mind, a very important consideration. God is still busy. He is not yet finished; how then can we be finished?

However, the Preacher has a still deeper reason. God acts not only with his understanding, his reason, his wisdom. He also acts with his heart, his will, his good pleasure. Things appear as they do, each in its own time, because it so pleases God. And the good pleasure of his will is always unfathomable. It is not entirely fair to respond only with one's reason and then to wail that things are not rationally transparent. We must respond also with our wills. The Lord God wills things in their time. We should try to come to the point where we, too, will them.

Communism overlooks this factor of will and God's good pleasure and, therefore, also the element of unfathomableness of things. No matter how much Communism, on the surface, is also oriented to the deed and to the will, in the roots of its experience of the world it is rationalistic. It imagines that it can determine the absolute meaning of the historical process scientifically. According to the Bible, this is impossible in principle. The Bible, therefore, also undermines dictatorship by a single party or by philosophy, and it refuses to admit the notion that the state must or may realize this absolute meaning by force.

Peacemakers ... *continued from page 11*

went to Mass with him a few times. His church had more girls than the local Christian Reformed Church. You had to go to church in those days, any church. It was called Church Parade and part of the official program. Two other troop mates got killed years later and in separate incidents. One shot himself in Ottawa and the other got killed in a plane crash. They, too, are remembered, but the personal impact was different. I don't quite know how to explain that.

So very young

All of this flashed through my mind the instant I heard the news about Mayerthorpe. And it hurt.

The next thought was really more of a question: wives, kids? The details were just not in those early media reports. Those are the things other police officers want to know right away. I don't really know why, or then, maybe I do. There was no thought about the shooter. He didn't count. He was dead. Only when that fact sunk in, there emerged a very un-Christian fleeting notion, "Good riddance!" You may not like that, but it is the truth.

Then the photos emerged. I remember thinking, 'My God, they are so very young.' That's what happens when you are 67 years old: all junior members look much too young to be even in the Force. I conveniently forgot that I was twenty once upon a time. And yes, police officers do swear, even one who is an elder in the church. It's not meant as swearing, but there it is.

Only much later could tears no longer be held back. Yes, police officers do cry on occasion. It takes a while. All the things I have tried to share with you come to the surface. Then there is no stopping it. It is intensely personal. I can't speak for other officers. For me it occurred during the televised memorial service: four family members were dead and were being honored by the nation. But you know that and I don't want to dwell on the point, other than to say a piece of me had died as well.

The name of Jesus

Only when the tears dried up did I think of God. Suddenly there it was on national TV: the name of Jesus, his saving grace being proclaimed, the moving expressions of deep and abiding faith, the public acknowledgement that God is our source of strength. It is the same one who sustained me and my good wife and children throughout my career. Most of those sentiments were expressed by Force members of high and lower rank, by the Force's Chaplains, and by Force families. It was the Force of old that I know so well. It made me proud and that included the trumpet playing of the "Last Post" by Cst. Owen Rusticus, son of Ed Rusticus in Peterborough. What an honour.

And then it dawned on me: just maybe we are still a Christian nation. We simply cannot shake off the founding principles, traditions and values and obviously we have not done so in the Force, a national institution. All of it eased the pain and I am grateful. Life will go on: it is in the human spirit.

The four members will never be forgotten. Their names will be added to the RCMP Honour Roll Monument at the Training Academy in Regina. In time, a street on Academy grounds may be named after them, either there or at the Canadian Police College in Ottawa. Mayerthorpe and their respective home towns may perhaps do likewise.

Their grave sites will always be regularly attended to by Force veterans and where that it is impossible, by serving members. That is true for all deceased members throughout Canada who have served since 1873. Any member has the right to be interned in the official RCMP Cemetery at the Academy, if desired. Most recruits take a walk there one time or another to read the markers. It leaves an impression on you.

Widows and children will receive our support for as long as it takes. The RCMP-crested headstones of deceased members, supplied by the Force, or the ones preferred and supplied by Force families, will always be kept in good repair at Force expense. We look after our own.

I know, because I look after six of them in this area. The oldest is dated 1925. Amongst the six, is the one of my troop mate, a member of the family, Constable Terry Hoey, who died much too young.

Four equally young family members just now joined him in a better place where peacemakers are blessed forever.

Budgeting rule #2: "Save now! Buy later."

Reflections on Stewardship
Rick De Graaf

Last week, Greta helped us delve into the first of three simple rules for budgeting based on Ted Boer's book *Three Simple Rules* – Guaranteed to Improve Your Finances. (Contact me for a copy [$6.50 includes mailing] or visit www.ThreeRules.org and download your own free copy.) This week I'll take you through rule #2 from the same source.

To recap, what are those three incredibly simple, common sense rules?

1. Spend less than you earn.
2. **Save now! Buy later.**
3. Know Debt.

Let's look at rule #2: Save Now! Buy Later.

As a child I can still remember the advertising jingle: "Buy now, pay later!" Today, the first part of that jingle is still prominent, however, the latter part is lost in the unmentioned fine print. What used to be called MasterCharge has become MasterCard. Any talk about paying back is too negative and might hurt sales! This rule #2 runs in direct conflict with the modern 'spend-like-crazy' store-bedecked economy of today! Practising this rule is like trying to swim against the current. Why even our best friends are buying furniture on the "No –No – No" plan!

Though it's not always possible to do, saving now to buy later is one of the best ways to ensure that what we purchase will be well researched, valued and well utilized.

Saving from your income to pay for future needs is critical. If you drive a car, each time you do, you're wearing it down and eventually it will need to be repaired or replaced. If you own a house, eventually the shingles start peeling off or paint starts to flake or the furnace starts to go on strike or the water heater no longer heats or holds water, etc. Your little boy, you hope, will grow up and want to go to college.

If we don't save for these eventualities, guess what happens: we either have to do without or we borrow money – most likely on plastic. Saving is thinking ahead and being ready. Without savings, you are living at the edge and vulnerable to the exploitation of high interest charges for unsecured debt.

Saving for the future is also biblical: "The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets." Prov. 21:20 (Living Bible Version)

Ted recommends that we have a saving plan that includes three components:

1. A savings plan for emergencies
2. A savings plan for short-term needs (5 years)
3. A savings plan for long-term needs (>5 years)

1. *Emergency savings*: The purpose of this account is to take care of significant unplanned expenses like car repairs, broken washers and water heaters etc. Ted recommends that we should have about 5% of our annual income in reserve, higher if we are at risk of being laid off. You can get there by transferring 10 percent (preferably) from each pay period into a special emergency savings account that you set up for that purpose.
2. *Short-term savings*: The goal for this special account is to enable you to pay cash for big-ticket items rather than using credit. Think about buying your next car with cash. Even today, you can get a better deal with cash. How much should you save? Begin by listing all the items that you plan or need to buy in the next 5 years. Estimate their cost and figure out how many months to the time that you will likely need to purchase them. Add and divide to calculate how much you should be saving monthly for each item. The total of all the items on a monthly basis is what you should be stashing into your Short-term savings account. Try to use higher interest earning instruments such as GICs to maximise the interest earned.
3. *Long-term savings*: The objective for these savings is to help you accomplish your family's long-term goals. Included are things like your children's education, weddings, your retirement (Registered Pensions, RRSPs) etc. How much to save depends on what your long-term goals are. The sooner you start the greater the benefit from compounding.

If you can save 10 percent of your income every month, you'll able to establish your emergency fund first and then work on your short-term and long-term savings. If it is impossible or a major struggle for you to save 10 percent, then a likely culprit is the debt you are carrying now – something that Greta will write about in this column in the next issue.

Stewardly Tip: Are you an impulse buyer? Admit it and deal with it head on! Stay out of the places that tempt you the most. Put your credit cards in a container of water and put it in your freezer. Ask yourself, do I really need this? Consider how many hours of net take-home pay it takes to make the purchase and try to find satisfaction in an alternative non-purchase way.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: "Budgeting Rule #3: Know Debt"

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Small groups

The Priesthood of all believers being restored Part 2

Pieter Hendricks

So far we've heard of the priesthood of all believers being realized through the New-Covenant Reformation, lost within three centuries, revisited before, during and following the Protestant Reformation, but not restored. The development of a much better and comprehensive priesthood of all believers needed to wait till the postmodern revolution of the twenty-first century was well on its way.

Why? Because postmodernism has created a new impetus, a new motivating force and positive energy to bring new life and meaning to the priesthood of believers.

Generally speaking, there are two different reactions to and ways of thinking about the influence of postmodernism. Those who think negatively about postmodernism look at it as the cause of loss of trust, values, truth, and security. Those who think positively of postmodernism look at it as bringing about greater freedom, more opportunities, and greater creativity.

In the former case, people are more negative and fearful of allowing and making changes in life. They want to hang on to traditional ways of living and being church, and as such reflect, what is called the representative culture of the modern era. In the latter case, however, people are more optimistic and look for ways to be more relevant in our times and thus to be more relevant as church in a changing world. Therefore, they feel the need to break with certain traditional ways of thinking about and being active as a church in so far as traditional thinking and doing things are no longer understood by people who grow up and are differently educated these days.

The church today needs, in some cases, to explain itself and some biblical truths in new ways, with a new terminology and sometimes also in new and more meaningful ways. Some see postmodernism not as a threat but more of a movement that allows less restraint and greater freedom which encourages greater and more stimulating creativity and expression of personal thoughts and feelings. These people represent what is called the participatory culture. The following box contrasts the representative culture and the participatory culture.

This overview shows that people have gained more freedom in these postmodern days, that leadership has changed from being authoritative to being instructive and encouraging, that people's attitudes have changed, and that they have been entrusted with exciting responsibilities. These shifts have taken place among managers and employers, employers and employees, clergy and laity, church leadership and membership.

In many instances, clergy and laity alike have come to see how important and biblical it is to get away from too much disparity between them, and to seek ways to use the creativity, spiritual giftedness, and the spiritual wisdom of all members of the church. Besides, the laity in general is much better educated than any generation before them.

Alongside the laity's greater ability to contribute meaningfully to church life and growth, we see their increased emancipation due to postmodern influence, as well as the influence of the Holy Spirit. Many of them seem to be more open, sensitive and receptive to the power and guidance of the triune God, the Holy Spirit. In a growing number of churches laity has taken on more responsibilities and greater participation in church activities such as leadership and worship. These kinds of changes have already contributed to a greater manifestation of the priesthood of the laity as it returns from captivity. As it goes with the popular sovereignty of the laity so it goes with the priesthood of all believers.

In our days a devolution of large areas into smaller areas, and a fragmentation of large spheres into smaller spheres has taken place. We notice that a devolution of the church has led to the formation of many small groups. A growing number of church leaders have discovered that the break-up of a large unit into smaller units has biblical support, e.g. Acts 2:42-47, as well as historical support e.g. the early Christian church. Churches are divided into smaller groups, while keeping the large group gatherings for worship celebrations and the administration of the sacraments.

The Two-Dimensional church is a church that has the large group gatherings as part of the church as institute, with the Word and sacraments, creeds, confessions, matters of discipline, etc., and at the same time small ministry groups (SMG) as part of the church as organism. These SMG provide environments that stimulate believers to share their faith and life in Christ more intimately with each other, and through which ministries of mutual care, evangelism and participation in other spheres of life in the name of Jesus Christ happen.

Representative Culture (Modern Era)

(a) People want and need to be controlled and have decisions made for them.
(b) The task of leadership is to administer guidance and regulations.
(c) People do only the things they are rewarded for doing.
(d) People cannot be trusted to use their personal freedom in service of the people society or organization.

Participatory Culture (Postmodern Era)

(a) People want to make their own decisions and have multiple choices.
(b) Leadership is emboldening and empowering others to lead.
(c) People will make sacrifices for the good of others.
(d) Human systems are self-organizing, and can be trusted to invest wisely of their resources and time.

What we start to realize is that the centuries-long existence of a primarily institutional church, with mostly men in the driver's seat, is changing. It is changing because people have sensed for a long time that this institutional church alone is not satisfying and productive in terms of personal spiritual growth, evangelism and Christian involvement in other spheres of life.

Over the years, people have felt the need of coming together in smaller groups for Bible study and prayer to satisfy their inner longing for a living faith, being a better witness and a better person in one's own relationships. The need for more positive relationships and how to realize them at home, at work and at church has played a definite factor in forming small groups. This has been especially true for women in how they have started and given leadership to and profited from Coffee Break programs over many years.

This matter of relationships is not particularly a thing men are interested in, and for many still a reason for not getting involved in small groups. However, more and more men begin to see the importance and validity of small groups. As women have entered the traditional domain of men (church as institute) so men begin to enter the realm of relationships, a domain more familiar to women, by joining them in small group meetings.

While all this is taking place we may remind ourselves that God's Word is about relationships, and that part of its central message is the need for reconciliation. The truth about reconciliation is that it is made possible and effective through Christ's work on the cross. Reconciliation is, first of all, about a person's reconciliation with God, and subsequently with one's neighbor, who can be as close as one's own spouse, children, parents, friends, colleagues, etc. Looking at a Bible passage such as 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, we learn that the ministry of reconciliation belongs to all believers. It is a real priestly ministry, which means that believers, who are all priests, need to learn how to be more willing and effective in this ministry. Small groups are essential in helping believers get more seriously involved in the ministry of reconciliation. They are also essential in helping revitalize and develop the priesthood of believers.

Therefore, the development of small groups should not be seen as a threat to the familiar traditional, institutional church, but accepted as a welcome and necessary addition. The former will become more meaningful with the latter. Both the institutional and organic dimension of the one church belong together without any form of competition. They complement each other. They belong together, as husband (representing the church as institute-authority/discipline/worship celebration) and wife (representing the church as organism-relationships/discipling/prayer)forming a covenant unity. So they are enabled to become fruitful, resulting in growth. Both dimensions of the one church are covenant oriented, as both include adults and children.

These days we are seeing, and hopefully becoming part of, a reformation and restructuring process that leads to a complete restoration of the universal priesthood of believers. During this Postmodern Reformation, present and future generations may well finish this job of restoring a well-functional universal priesthood that the Protestant Reformation once began. A revitalized universal priesthood results in a revitalized church.

One question that needs to be asked and answered is what kind of small groups will accomplish the revitalization of the universal priesthood and local churches? This question is asked because many people who have experienced small group participation through Bible study, prayer and a time of socializing have become disappointed and even turned off from any involvement in a small group. The kind of small groups which creates excitement and ongoing desire to take part in a small group is different from the usual small groups.

The kind of small groups that have shown their ability to be instrumental in revitalizing believers in terms of faith, prayer, motivation, life and witness are called cell groups. Cell groups, that form together a Cell Church, have mutual care, life-changing experience, evangelism and cell multiplication as primary goals. They are family friendly, as children are a definite part of the small group meetings, while the usual small groups have only adults.

However, in view of the Reformed world and life view, embraced by many believers, we like to speak of small ministry groups (SMG). These SMG follow principles applied by cell groups, but have one important ministry goal added. This additional goal is bringing a Christian witness or influence in other spheres of life as demonstrated by Germany's Spener and England's Wesley.

In developing two dimensional churches we need to reform, transform and restructure established churches. This is not an easy task. A movie like *Luther* emphasizes the reality that opposition, hurt and other forms of hardship can become part of reforming existing churches planted in long traditions and church cultures. But, as the transformation of these churches succeeds, they will no longer be known solely for their support of church planting programs in term of finance and manpower. These churches will become known for their own successful ministries in terms of mutual care, evangelism and Christian witness and leadership in other spheres of life as their churches are now organized around small ministry groups.

The time has come to unleash the power of God's Spirit by transforming churches and so tap the great potential of gifts, healing, spiritual energy, comfort and witness that is still locked up in these churches.

Pieter Hendriks (Pastor Emeritus), Consultant Church Renewal and Development

Life stories

Salvation comes to the Caner brothers

Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner

Our father, Acar, met Mother in Sweden, where he was attending university. After falling in love, getting married, and having their first two sons, Ergun and Erdem, in Stockholm, Father and Mother moved to America, the land of opportunity. Emir was born after we arrived in Ohio. The marriage was doomed from the beginning, a clash of cultures. Our mother was a single child, raised in Stockholm and educated all over Europe. By the time she was 20, she had attended the Sorbonne in Paris, and had traveled the world. Father was from heartier stock. As the youngest child in his family, he had earned everything he owned and was steeped in Islamic culture. Their assumptions about marriage clearly clashed.

The divorce, which was finalized in America, was painful. As in most divorces, the children became the human "ropes" in a tug-of-war, torn between parents. A pattern developed of weekend visits between Columbus and Gahanna, in central Ohio. Yet even the wrenching experience of divorce would not prepare us for our father's disavowal.

Entering high school, Ergun was a typical young man, except that he was a devout Muslim. Even through the divorce, our parents had maintained our rearing in the mosque. Each weekend, we would travel to Broad Street in Columbus, Ohio, where our father had helped found the Islamic Foundation. The mosque in Toledo was too far a drive, so the Foundation Center was established. Father did the call to prayer on occasion.

We did the rakats (daily prayers); we celebrated Ramadan. We read the Qur'an and Hadith regularly. In every way, we were devout, serious Muslims. But our devotion was not an act of love, but of fear. No Muslim has eternal security. Every Muslim fears the scales of justice, which weigh his good deeds against his bad deeds. We were taught that Christianity and Islam were antithetical, stemming from a centuries-old conflict dating back to the Crusades, when Muslims were slaughtered by the thousands.

This history, however, did not stop Jerry Tackett. Ergun's best friend in high school, Jerry was the son of a preacher, and an active member at Stelzer Road Baptist Church. Jerry didn't know all of the history. He simply told Ergun that Jesus loved him, and invited him to church for revival services. At Stelzer Road Baptist, the environment was so different from what Ergun had expected. People were warm. They didn't mock when he stumbled through the hymns. They loved him in spite of his reticence – they literally loved him to the Cross.

After hearing about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, it became evident to Ergun that Islam was wrong about one seminal thing: there was no way that Jesus could have been a prophet, as Islam taught. Jesus was arrested and imprisoned on a dual indictment – the Romans held him for insurrection, the Jewish leaders convicted him of blasphemy, that is, claiming to be God. Islam, in order to resolve the matter of the Resurrection, teaches that Judas, not Jesus, was crucified, allowing Jesus to appear three days later. Yet even that bit of misinformation doesn't confront the larger issue of Jesus' deity. Even extra-biblical history notes that Jesus claimed to be God, an act of blasphemy, which was a capital offense.

To borrow a motif from the Christian philosopher C.S. Lewis, if Jesus claimed to be God, he couldn't have been a prophet. He could have been insane, like those who wander the streets assuming they are divine. But if he were insane, he couldn't have been one of Allah's prophets. He could have been a fraud, deceiving people, but, again, an impostor and charlatan couldn't have been a prophet of Allah. Ergun faced one other option: Jesus who he said he was: Immanuel – God with us.

On that particular night in the revival services, the conviction of the Holy Spirit was palpable. On the next day, a Friday, Ergun returned to the Islamic center a new creature, freed from the scales of fear by grace and the atonement of Jesus. He assumed that other Muslims also wanted to be free of fear. That was not the case.

Ergun's brothers, however, listened. Erden accepted Christ in the basement of their home. Ergun then invited Emir to a revival service the following year. There, for the first time in his life, Emir heard that God loved him and desired to have a personal relationship with him. Though he had been to church before, this was the first time he could recall hearing a preacher speak openly and honestly about the exclusivity of the Gospel. Only through the blood of Jesus, spilt on the cross, can someone be saved. Yet the preacher also spoke compassionately about God's desire to save everyone. Although there was only one way, the path was open for all who would believe. On Nov. 4, 1982, Emir was born again.

In 1982, Ergun surrendered to the gospel ministry. It was the last time he saw our father for 17 years. Acar disowned his sons, although it could have been worse: according to Hadith 9.57, all three of us brothers should have been killed.

Tragedies and Commitments

Seventeen years later, we Caner brothers were reunited with our father, four days before he died. His second wife had convinced him to see us, and we flew in from all over the country, hoping. By this time, Erden was married with a son, Anthony, was a successful stockbroker, and had remained active in his church. Emir had completed his Ph.D. and was teaching at Southeastern Seminary in North Carolina. Ergun had married Jill Morris in 1994, and had a four-month-old son, Braxton Paige. Ergun and Eir

See **Caner bros.** *p, 19...*

Ed DenHaan: frontier faithfulness

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Ed DenHaan is retiring to new frontiers after 27 years as CRC campus minister at the University of Guelph. As of this May, Jamie VanderBerg will be leaving Jubilee Fellowship in St. Catharines to succeed him in this mission post.

DenHaan came to Guelph after nine years of congregational ministry in Charlottetown and Calgary. "I was eager for mission on the frontier," he told me, and the call to campus ministry from First CRC in Guelph opened up that possibility for him.

Hilda Vanderklippe (Smithville CRC) was on the search committee. "We liked Ed for his engaging, warm, personality. And his willingness to grow into the role. He didn't quite see himself as an academic at the time. But he has certainly connected well with that world – with both students and staff."

"I'm more experiential than a book learner," explains DenHaan, with a laugh. "I nearly died in seminary! I need 'reality rootage.'"

The vision for campus ministry at the time was narrowly focused on the pastoral care of Christian Reformed students. DenHaan has since expanded the vision to a vital mission engagement with the whole of the campus.

Faith and potatoes

DenHaan was ideally suited to Guelph – originally an agricultural college – because of his own background on the farm. DenHaan had grown up in Alliston on a mixed-farm, and spent three years working there before going off to Calvin. He led the local 4-H Club as well as the Junior Farmers Association.

When at Guelph he inspired students and faculty to consider the relationship between faith and agriculture. With Albert VanDonkersgood, they organized "Faith and Agriculture" meetings regularly through the 80s. When interest rates fell around that time and some farmers went bankrupt and were going to lose their farms, they collaborated on "Project Hope." This was a two-day workshop that the assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture attended, geared towards finding ways forward for these families in a system that showed no compassion.

This ministry is a small example of DenHaan's broader engagement with the campus – the call to bring faith to bear on all of life. His stint as chair of the Institute for Christian Studies Board of Trustees is further indication of his passion for faith-filled academics.

DeHaan encouraged people in leadership positions on campus to be public about their faith, said Jack Van de Hoef, current pastor at Guelph First CRC. He recalls how one professor on campus said, "If it wasn't for Ed, I wouldn't be so open about my faith on campus." Van de Hoef added, "Ed brings faith discussion onto a respected plane in the university."

Pastoral golf

DenHaan is known as a friendly pastor, a man who "lives with an open heart" and knows how to "touch soul." These are the words of Sidney Couperus, former pastor at First CRC Guelph. He tells the story of how, on a particularly difficult day in ministry, DenHaan took him to a driving range.

"I never golf," said Couperus. "But I got one of those drivers, and we put some faces on the golf balls. It was healing for me. Ed understands."

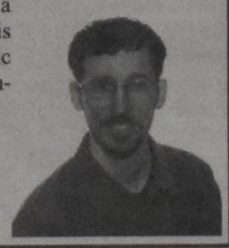
DenHaan looks back on campus ministry through the years, and notes how it has shifted from a primarily "WASP" enterprise, to an ecumenical endeavour, and now, to a multi-faith model. "Its shifted from self-sufficiency to partnership ministry," he says. "Its about insisting on integrity while making space for others. Not a melted-down version of your faith."

"Ed is not at all apologetic about being a Christian," said Van de Hoef. "He allows himself to be Christian, and he allows others to be who they are. Everyone appreciates Ed on the campus."

DenHaan reflects on the position of faith at Guelph now. "In practice this place doesn't know what to do with the God connection. Its growing, but there's still a tremendous distance to go – for academic life that is leavened by the Spirit. Many faculty have difficulty defining their worldview with respect to their expertise. Students are not offered meaning as much as they are offered data. The university is slowly becoming aware of this."

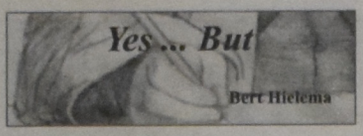
Reflecting on his retirement, DenHaan says, "I'm on the edge of another frontier. I have to trust the Lord, just like when I came."

Ed DenHaan is an Eternal Student in his own fashion, with his own unique and thought-filled language. He has been a faithful agent in – and this is one of his characteristic terms – "God's great reconstruction project."



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

Opinion



Uncle Charlie, General Motors and Jonah

In 1946 everybody in Europe was still reeling from the six-year war that had ended the previous year. America came out as the big winner, so when an old and rich relative from there announced his intention to visit us, I volunteered to meet him at the train, hoping that I'd get my first ever taxi ride out of this.

But no, I had to slog his heavy trunks to a street car, and worse, from the nearest stop, one km away, home. The man, a brother of a grandfather, had emigrated to Lynden, Washington in early 1900. He may not have been rich, but his daughter certainly was. She married into the family of Charles E. Wilson, who was called "Engine Charlie" because he was President of General Motors from 1941-1953 and famous for claiming that "What's good for GM is good for America."

Later, when he was nominated for Secretary of Defense – yes, I did have connections in high places – "Uncle Charlie" (whom I never met) in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on his proposed nomination on January 15, 1953, defended his now famous utterance by stating: "For years I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors and vice versa. The difference did not exist. Our company is too big. It goes with the welfare of the country."

True, in 1953 General Motors was big. It sold more than one of every two vehicles manufactured in North America, had more than 50 percent of the market. Those were the (GM) days, my friend. And they now have seen their end. Today the very existence of General Motors is in doubt. And that is a bad omen for America, because the reverse is also true: "What's bad for General Motors is also bad for the United States."

Consider the state of that former giant now producing a mere 22 percent of all North American cars. General Motors bet its future on hulking gas guzzlers and engines whose basic designs date to the 1950s. The United States is in a similar position. Its entire infrastructure has been built on cars, now an outdated concept. Subdivisions, shopping centres, employment places, mega churches, all can only be accessed through motor transport. Mass transit is basically non-existent. Its entire economy is totally geared to the life style of yesteryear when the cup of fuel was running over.

Now, with gas prices heading through the sunroof, GM's and America's fortunes are up in the air. With cheap gas gone forever especially North America – yes we too are part of the problem – is at the edge of a terrible re-adjustment. For GM, despite rebates as high as $6,000, sales of its models, especially SUV and the Hummer H2, have dropped by double digits. As a result, the auto company has taken a $4 billion cash-flow hit and laid off thousands of workers, never to be recalled. Yet losses are still expected to reach $850 million in the first quarter of 2005 alone.

The United States is in a similar fix. By betting the country on prosperity forever, its administration has slashed taxes and with income down, big losses – deficits – have become the norm. Don't buy General Motors shares. You might as well throw your money away. Its consolidated debt amounts to more than $300 billion, while Ford has $173 billion outstanding in bond debt. Between the two of them they owe more than Canada's National debt which is $363 billion. All in $US.

However, if you do believe that General Motors will stay in business, buy its bonds: they yield almost 10 percent. Don't buy USA bonds right now. With interest rising, bond prices are falling: they are based on yesterday's low rates so as interest rates go up, bond value goes down. Stay in cash if you have any. Get a fixed, long-term mortgage while the rates are still good.

One of America's problem is lack of savings. While there seems a lot of 'saving' going on in the theological sense, money savings are practically non-existent there. That's bad, because it means that billions of dollars have to be borrowed abroad – at least $2 billion each day – which further weakens the dollar and leads to higher interest rates, which, in turn, cuts into the country's PPP, People's Purchasing Power, and hurts especially the gas guzzler car makers, such as General Motors.

Frankly I think that General Motors will go bankrupt within the next decade, probably sooner than later. Its other obligations in the form of pensions and medical costs are also far too big. It has 2.3 pensioners for each active worker. A full 30 percent of these retired workers are obese, which cost GM an extra $6000 per year in medical expense. As a consequence, where Toyota makes $2,000 per car, GM manages only a measly $280 per unit sold.

What will decreasing car sales do for the American economy? What will that do to the Canadian economy? Ontario now makes more cars that Michigan. Will that last? Who will survive? My bets are on Toyota and Honda in Asia, Daimler Chrysler in North America, and Volkswagen and Peugeot-Nissan in Europe. Even those will be faced with an ever shrinking market.

Nineveh

Survival goes beyond the automotive industry. The real question is whether humanity will last in the next few decades. The death of John Paul II crowded out something in the news that reminded me of Jonah, a man not all that well known. There were a couple of movies on Moses, another biblical figure, and a musical on Joseph, I believe, but Jonah has not been a media figure. So let me prime your memory: he was the man who was in the belly of a fish, thrown overboard because he didn't want to go to Nineveh, the most important city of the pre-Roman era some 2700 years ago. It was then like London and Los Angeles and New York and Beijing all in one. There Jonah was to tell its people that its wickedness had cried to heaven: "Repent in 40 days or Die!"

Being rather uncomfortable swallowed alive by some huge sea monster, Jonah prayed and God directed the fish to a convenient beach, where he discharged his passenger and on his way he went, quite reluctantly. He'd much rather see Nineveh reduced to rubble. Surprisingly, his ominous warning had results. Perhaps his total indifference to the people's plight there did the trick. The Lord moves in mysterious ways. The populace repented and the city was spared.

Frankly, Jonah hated the outcome. He was angry at God for being so soft-hearted. God retorted – yes, we can argue with God – "Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left – small children in other words – and many cattle as well. Should I, God, not be concerned about that great city?"

The moral of this story: God cares for his world, for the small children especially, but equally for grown-ups and animals. But he also wants people to live sustainably.

1360 Jonahs

Back to today. This past week a lot of Jonahs were in the news. Not in the churches, I am afraid. Many there – like Jonah at one time – are still stuck in the belly of the fish, oblivious to the groaning of creation and thus unable to hear the Gospel of the Earth. But secular sources did notice. The CBC National with Preacher Mansbridge made it the opening item. The Globe and Mail put it on the third page, reprinting it from the Guardian News Service, a British source. Somehow I didn't notice it in my daily dose of the New York Times. Slate, which surveys the more important American papers, did not mention it either.

Who then were these modern day Jonahs and what did they say? They were 1360 scientists from 95 countries who reported, after 4 years of intense study, that our wickedness cries to heaven. These people are today's prophets, persons who tell us what we already know but are afraid to acknowledge. Their study contains what its authors call "a stark warning" for the entire world. Like Jonah of old they said "Repent or Die!" The wetlands, forests, savannahs, estuaries, coastal fisheries and other habitats that recycle air, water and nutrients for all living creatures are being irretrievably damaged.

In effect, we modern Nineveh-dwellers, are now a hazard to the other 10 million species on the planet, and to ourselves. Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted. In other words: our selfish greed has reached such proportions that we are making it impossible for future generations to survive. We, as the human race, are living beyond our means: almost two-thirds of the natural machinery that supports life on Earth is being degraded by human pressure. We've been using – abusing –, the earth's capital, rather than living off the interest.

The most important law of life – I agree this sounds more like a sermon – is to love your neighbor as yourself, neighbors being not just those next door, but also babies yet to be born, our neighbors in time. The plants, animals and trees, all matters on which our lives depend, are also included in that love because every creature is a Word of God. To offend nature is to offend God.

Here are some offensive numbers. At least a quarter of all fish stocks are over-harvested. In some areas, the catch is now less than a hundredth of that before industrial fishing. Cod has collapsed. An estimated 90% of the total weight of the ocean's large predators – tuna, swordfish and sharks – has disappeared in recent years. Deforestation is rampant and increases the risks of malaria and cholera, and opens the way for new and so far unknown diseases to emerge. Cutting down trees also threatens with extinction an estimated 12 percent of bird species, 25 percent of mammals and more than 30 percent of all amphibians. By using up supplies of fresh groundwater faster than they can be recharged, we are depleting assets at the expense of our children.

Will the world listen to these Jonahs this time, now that the peril is not just local but universal? Will the next Pope be a Jonah and call out: "Repent of our environmental sins or Die?"

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Classifieds

Caner brothers *continued from p.17*

had pastured and preached, and completed their education, with Ergun's Ph.D. dissertation alone left to complete.

Yet as we three brothers entered our father's house, our minds returned to that long-ago day on the soccer field. We were the three sons of Acar Mehmet Caner, our hero. In our culture, it is an important rite of passage to lay your son in your father's hands. As Ergun did so, tears filled his eyes. Seventeen years after expulsion, Ergun and his father met one last time.

All throughout the time together, we shared in small talk. Ergun was introduced to his two half-sister,s whom we had never met. Other men from the mosque were in the home, some of whom had taught the brothers in their youth. We all avoided the inevitable and obvious: our father was dying; it was only a matter of time.

We would love to complete the story with a deathbed conversion, but that was not the case. Our mother made her profession of faith in 1991, and our grandmother did the same in 1995. But our father never accepted Christ as Lord. As far as we know, he entered a Christless eternity.

As these words are written, tears spring afresh.

If the events of Sept. 11 have spurred a national debate, some of the topics discussed are not new to us. Since 1982, we have preached and taught about Islam, sharing our hearts' desire for salvation among the 1.2 billion Muslim people who need Jesus. After allowing us to preach in their churches, pastors would graciously pat us on our backs and tell us how fascinating this world religion seems.

After thousands of people were incinerated in the World Trade Center bombings, people began to listen.

But please do not assume this is a diatribe filled with invective against a world religion. We want Christians to understand Islam more clearly and to present Christ more effectively. We want the former because it is our history, and it is our past. We want the latter because we wish we'd had the opportunity to do so for our father...our hero.

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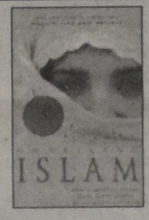

Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs
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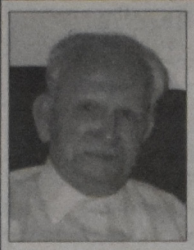
Birthday



Celebrating
Jan Kroezen's
100th Birthday
April 22, 2005

VALLEEN, U LOVEN WIJ:
JA, WIJ LOVEN U, OHEER
Psalm 75:1

With the words of one of Dad's favorite hymns (which he still sings lustily), we, as his children want to praise God and give God all the glory for Dad's 100th birthday, D.V. April 22, 2005. Praying for continued health,strength and well-being in spirit, soul and body.

From:
Arie & Greta (†) VanHelden, John & Jane Kroezen,
Gary & Ria (†) Kroezen, Libby Kroezen,
plus 19 grandchildren, 49 great-grandchildren,
and one great-great-grandchild.

Correspondence: Gary Kroezen
Shalom Deer Farm RR#1
Hepworth ON N0H 1P0

Personals

Christian woman (divorced), early 50's – living in Ontario – would like to correspond with sincere, non-smoking, Christian gentleman. Prayerfully awaiting your response at iamhis316@hotmail.com

For Rent

3 Georgian Bay waterfront house-keeping cottages for rent. One 3 bedroom, and two 2 bedroom. Complete with canoe, paddleboat and sea kayaks. Minutes from Killbear Provincial Park. Great for family get-togethers – sleeps 14
info@jacknifecottages.com
905-887-0304

Bed & Breakfast

INGERSOLL, ON
Near London

Lil' Bit Country Guest Suite (B&B) Featuring a private entrance, elegant & spacious air conditioned *Guest Suite*, on the lower level, decorated richly in an oak decor to enhance the furnishings. The thermostat controlled gas fireplace brings warmth in the cooler seasons, while you are entertained with a generous library of videos, music, games and reading, along with cable television. A billiard table is also available for adult use. The *Guest Washroom* on the main floor level, features a large shower with a multi-pulsating head for your comfort. The suite *Kitchenette* is stocked with electrical appliances, dishes & supplies for refreshments available at your leisure. A comfortable *Queen Bed* with extra cots are available. Optional Continental or Self-catered breakfast can be provided in the suite or a full Breakfast is served in the Family Dining Room. Centrally located in SW Ontario, ideal for tourists, travellers or vacationers in the area, easy access to main highways and tourist attractions. Reduced rates for a Multi Night stay.
For *information – Nico and Alice Jukema.*
PH: 519-485-2101,
email: guestsuite@lilbitcountry.ca *web:*
www.lilbitcountry.ca

Anniversaries

60th Wedding Anniversary
1945 May 5 2005
Drenthe, the Neth. Brampton, Ont.

The Lord willing,

BERT AND TIENA LUBBERTS

will celebrate 60 years of marriage. We thank and praise God for the years he has blessed them with, and for the Chistian example they have been to us as a family.

With much love and best wishes:
Jane & Mark, Janie & Hank, John & Dianne,
Tim, Mary & Hilbert, Ruth & Ralph,
Rose & Fred, your 24 grandchildren (and spouses) and 22 great-grandchildren.

Mailing address:
7900 McLaughlin Rd S #109 HT
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

1975 April 4 2005

With thankful hearts
we wish to announce
the **30th Anniversary** of

RICK AND BARBARA FEENSTRA

I will sing to the Lord
because he has dealt bountifully with me.
Psalm 13:6

Congratulations!
Your children, grandchildren
& great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: 70 Front Ave
Brockville ON K6V 4J6

Amersfoort, the Neth. London, Ontario
1955 May 6 2005

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalm 100:5

We, the family of

TOM AND AUDREY KEMPKES (nee **vandeKamp**)

give praise to God on the occasion of their
50th Wedding Anniversary.

With all our love:
Peter Kempkes and Karen Laforet, *Dusseldorf, Germany*
Marianne & Bert Niezen – David, Laurie, Miranda, *London, ON*
Theo & Caroline Kempkes – Kayla, *St. Thomas, ON*
Helen Venema – Melanie, Peter, Selena, *St. Thomas, ON*
William & Sue Kempkes –
Beth, Tim, Mike, Jessie, *Window Rock, Arizona*
Joan & Phil Sullivan – Dan, Tom, *Sarnia, ON*
Georgie & Murray Rodenburg –
Christie, Michael, Andrew, Amy, *Corinth, ON*

There will be an **Open House** from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Good News C.R.C. in London on Saturday, May 7, 2005.
Best wishes only, please.

Home address: 63 Price St, London ON N5Z 2H8

1955 March 04 2005

With thanksgiving to our God
for his continuing faithfulness,
we hope, D.V. to celebrate
the **50th Wedding Anniversary**
of our parents and grandparents

MARTHINUS AND GAYE DATEMA
(nee **Hibma**)

Congratulations Dad and Mom!
We pray for God's continued blessings.

With all our love,
Robert Datema
Judy & Dave Siemon
Andrew, Bethany, Christy, Dan, Erin
Glena & Eric Nonkes
Jacob, Micah, McKayla, Benjamin,
Linnea, Marissa
Donald & Cathy Datema
Lauren, Emily
Wayne & Deb Datema
Courtney, Kurtis, Brett

Open House will be held
April 30th, 2005 from 1 - 4 p.m.
at the Blyth Christian Reformed Church.

Home address: RR#3, Blyth ON N0M 1H0

Obituaries

I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in me will live even though he dies. John 11:25

HENRY RHEBERGEN

born in Rekken, Holland on December 20, 1936, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Sunday, March 20, 2005 in Cobourg, Ontario to sing in God's Heavenly Choir, joining the voices of those who went before him – baby daughter, son Philip, parents Peter & Hendrika (Karssenberg), father-in-law Dirk Vreugdenhil, brothers Berend (Sina) and John (Mary), sister Jo (Holger) Larsen, brothers-in-law Bart Boschman (Gerrie), Bill Hesselink (Diana), Sid Reitsma (Diny), John Vreugdenhil (Arlene) and his sister-in-law Bettie (Harry) Vreugdenhil.

Left waiting are his loving wife Lenie, his mother-in-law Maria Vreugdenhil, his dear daughters and families, Bonnie Hall – Robert, Maria, John Vanderwel & Brooke of *Cobourg*; Judy & Dan Zandstra – Cameron and Madeline of *Highland, Indiana*; Kim & Paul Triemstra – Lennea of *Nepean*; Christina & Troy Rhodes – Isaac of *South Bend, Indiana*; Patricia of *Whitby*; his dear son and family, Colin & Mary Ellen Rae – Joshua of *Trenton*; siblings Anita – *Drayton*, Gerrie Boschman-Neede, Diana Hesselink of *Georgetown*, Gerald (Frances) of *Tottenham*, Diny Reitsma of *Burlington*, George (Grace) of *Belleville*, Engbert (Ina) of *Brighton*, Elly (Ralph) Hoftyzer of *Drayton*, Bert of *Hamilton*, John (Rita) of *Edmonton*, Tine (Harry) Houtman of *Toronto*, Peter (Cathy) of *Chesley*; siblings-in-law Adrian (Trudie), Marien (Anne), Frank (Doris) all of *Frankford*, Harry (Gloria) of *Dunnville*, Dick (Pieta) of *Bowmanville*, Gord (Marilyn) and Marie Ann (Dick) Lammers both of *Frankford*. The many dear children who lived with us for a time, his many dear nephews and nieces, Henry knew you all and loved you.

Correspondence: Lenie Rhebergen, 42 Coverdale Ave
Cobourg ON K9A 4H3

December 20, 1936 March 20, 2005
Rekken, Gelderland Cobourg, Ontario

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'"
Matthew 25:21a

On Palm Sunday morning after a short battle with cancer

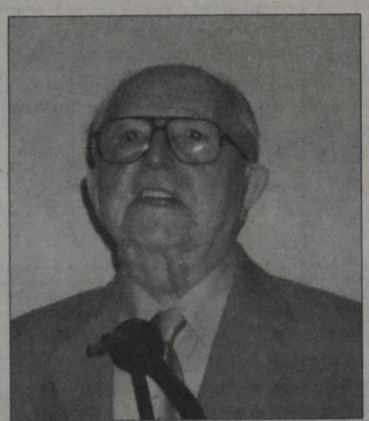
HENRY RHEBERGEN

made a triumphant entry into heaven and met his Lord and Savior face to face. Although we will miss him we know that he is now singing God's praises in the heavenly choir. We pray that God will comfort and strengthen his wife, Lenie, and their family in the time ahead.

Beloved son of:
Peter (†) & Hendrika (†) Rhebergen
Dear brother of:
Anita Rhebergen, *Drayton, ON*
Johanna (†) & Holger Larsen & Edna Sweet, *Belleville, ON*
Berend (†) & Sina Rhebergen, *Hengelo, Ov., The Netherlands*
Gerritje & Bart (†) Boschman, *Neede, The Netherlands*
Gerald J. & Frances Rhebergen, *Tottenham, ON*
John C.(†) & Mary Rhebergen Smit & Albert Smit, *Carrying Place, ON*
Diana & Bill (†) Hesselink, *Georgetown, ON*
Diny & Sid (†) Reitsma, *Burlington, ON*
George & Grace Rhebergen, *Belleville, ON*
Engbert & Ina Rhebergen, *Brighton, ON*
Elly & Ralph Hoftyzer, *Drayton, ON*
Bert Rhebergen, *Hamilton, ON*
John & Rita Rhebergen, *Edmonton, AB*
Tina & Harry Houtman, *Toronto, ON*
Peter & Cathy Rhebergen, *Chesley, ON*
and families.

Correspondence: Mrs. Lenie Rhebergen, 42 Coverdale Ave
Cobourg ON K9A 4H3

Birthday



Sappemeer – Brockville – Brampton

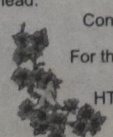
On April 21, 2005

Harry Mulder

hopes to celebrate his **95th Birthday**.

The picture shows him in his favorite position speaking at a family reunion to the 100 plus attendees. Opa would always testify of his faith in his Lord and Saviour, urging all to follow his lead.

Congratulations from your family.



For the past 22 years he has lived in
Holland Christian Homes
HT306 – 7900 McLaughlin Rd S
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

Obituary

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil1:21

On March 24, 2005 the Lord
graciously took unto himself our beloved father

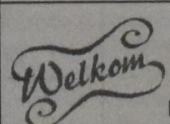
NORMAN JOHN FRIEND

loving husband of the late Janet Friend.

Left to celebrate his home going are their children:
Nelly & John de Kok, *Springfield, ON*
Rina & Ron Moore, *St Davids, ON*
Jeannette & Sietze de Jong, *Lindsay, On*
Bill & the late Carol Friend, *Vernon, BC*
Frank & June Friend, *Brockville, ON*
Norm & Linda Friend *Newmarket, ON*
Evelina & David Bassie, *St Marys, On*
Margaret & Locksley Stuffles, *Holland Landing, ON*
Jack & Grace Friend, *St George, ON*
Peter & Menna Friend, *Shelburn, ON*
He also left 32 grandchildren, 61 great-grandchildren, & 3 great-great-grandchildren.

His celebration service took place March 29, 2005 at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ont. with Rev. R. Anjema officiating.
Interment at Newmarket Cemetary.

As expressions of sympathy donations may be made to Holland Christian Homes, Faith Manor, 7900 McLaughlin Rd S Brampton ON L6Y 5A7



May 1, 2005
3:00 p.m

DUTCH SERVICE
will be held in the
Ancaster Christian Reformed Church
Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

Milk & Honey Festival at Redeemer University College
May 30 to June 3.
The "Stories of Life, Stories for Life" theme features lectures by Dr. James Rusthoven and Professor Johanna Kuyvenhoven, concerts and excursions in the area.
For registration contact the Redeemer Box Office
877-779-0913 ext 4211

Job Opportunities

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES:

Maranatha CRC in Woodsto`ck, Ontario, is seeking a fulltime gifted person, confident in God's calling to Youth Ministries.This person must have a love for and the ability to work with young people, ages three to young adult, and work with council and senior pastor. Above all, this person must accept the Bible as the infallible Word and shall become a member of Maranatha CRC in Woodstock.
Please send resume to Chris Voskamp at email: chris.voskamp052@sympatico.ca
or fax Maranatha CRC at (519) 539-1184.

FELLOWSHIP CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

in Brighton, ON is insearch of a
Pastor of Education.

We are a young, energetic church situatedan hour east of Toronto. Through our visioning process, we identified the need for a Pastor who can raise up new leaders and equip existing leaders in the educational, youth and outreach ministries of the congregation. It is a **full time position** and training at the seminary level is preferable but we invite all applications.
Please send your resume to sheba@reach.net.

BRAMPTON SECOND CRC,

an energetic and diverse congregation situated in the Greater Toronto Area, is seeking a
full-time Youth Director

to help our youth grow in Christian faith, fellowship, service and to reach out in witness and service to others. Primary responsibilities include developing, implementing and running an effective relational youth ministry program. The Youth Director shall be an individual committed to Jesus Christ, trained to minister to young people and their families, possessing interpersonal, relational and administrative skills required to perform his/her duties.
Qualified candidates are invited to submit their resume to:
Jim Buisman jim.buisman@sympatico.ca
or 905-453-3685
(Church website: www.bramptonsecondcrc.com)

Part-time Youth Ministry Coordinator

The Classical Youth Ministry Team (CYMT) of Eastern Canada has an opening for a 15 hour a week position. This person would work with individual congregation's youth ministries as a resource, leadership trainer, and educator of congregations in the area of youth ministry. The successful candidate would also help organize retreats for youth, training sessions for leaders, and overall raise the awareness of the importance of youth ministry classis wide.
For more information, please contact
Pastor Ron Hosmar (CYMT Chairperson),
at 613-225-2889
or youthpastor@calvincrc.ca

The Heritage Fellowship of the Second Christian Reformed Church of Brampton, ON needs a **MINISTER OF PASTORAL CARE /PASTORAL WORKER**

The Heritage Fellowship is located at Holland Christian Homes, a retirement community of 1100 residents. It includes 240 nursing beds and six "independent living" high rise buildings. The successful applicant will be of Reformed background and part of a three-person Pastoral care team. Primary emphasis will be on pastoral visiting. Training in Chaplaincy will be an asset, as well as the ability to converse in the Dutch language.
For information please contact : Lenie VanGinkel,
1505 - 35 Kingknoll Dr, Brampton ON L6Y 5G5
Tel 905 - 796 - 3196 or clvanginkel@sympatico.ca

School Job Opportunities

LANGLEY CHRISTIAN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

is an established Christian School in the Fraser Valley with 450 students from Grade 7 to 12. For information on the school please refer to our website at www.langleychristian.com. We anticipate the following openings for the 2005-2006 school year.

- Full time High School teachers; particularly Athletics Director, Information Technology, Physics and Math, and Automotive Technology
- Full time Middle School teachers; particularly Grade 8
- Part time teachers; particularly Teacher Librarian (70%), Middle School French (50%), and Middle School Enrichment (20%)

The successful candidates will be committed Christians who are, or are eligible to be, fully certified teachers in BC. Preference will be given to candidates who received their teacher training in Christian universities or colleges and/or have experience in other CSI schools.
Please submit resume, philosophy of education and statement of faith to:

Henry Vanderveen
Middle and High Principal
Langley Christian School
22702 48th Ave
Langley BC V2Z 2T6
or hvanderveen@langleychristian.com

OTTAWA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

offers Christian education to 226 elementary school students from a diverse denominational background. We are accepting applications from qualified Christian teachers for a possible part-time Junior/Intermediate position. An ability to teach core French to Grades 5-8 is a prerequisite.
Interested applicants may forward their resumes and statements of faith to:
Mr. Paul Triemstra, Principal
Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave
Ottawa Ontario K2A 1P6
Tel: (613) 722-5836
Fax: (613) 722-5836
Email: paul@ocschool.org
Web: www.ocschool.org

Christian Home Position

WELLINGSTONE CHRISTIAN HOME,

a 124-unit senior's apartment complex, is accepting applications for a
SUPERINTENDENT.

Responsibilities include light maintenance and cleaning of buildings' common areas. Remunerations will include an all-expense paid apartment in complex. Position to start immediately. Submit resume to
Mr. Jim Bezemer, Chairman
jbezemer@sympatico.ca
or call 905-648-3460 or fax to 905-304-8721

Fort McMurray Christian School

190 Tamarack Way Fort McMurray
Alberta T9K 1A1
Phone: (780) 743-1079 Fax: (780) 743-1379

Fort McMurray Christian School is a member of Christian Schools International and Christian Schools Canada

Fort McMurray Christian School, a growing interdenominational school in the oilsands capital of Canada, requires a teacher for a grade 3/4 class and a half time teacher with gifts in the area of assessment and remediation for the 2005 - 2006 school year. The applicant's teaching must be consistent with the school's mission statement. God's faithfulness has allowed our school to serve our community for 12 years. We presently offer kindergarten to grade 9 to 76 students with a staff of six teachers. Visit our website: www.fortmcmurraychristianschool.ca

Please send resume, a statement of faith and your philosophy of teaching to:

Tena Siebenga-Valstar
C/O Fort McMurray Christian School
190 Tamarack Way
Fort McMurray AB T9K 1A1
Fax: (780)743-1379
Email: fmcs_s@hotmail.com or tvalstar@telus.net

REDEEMER University College

As a liberal arts and sciences university college rooted in the Reformed tradition of Christianity, we seek candidates who are committed to teaching and pursuing scholarship from this perspective.

Positions beginning Fall 2005:

Instructor of Mathematics - *Full Time, Limited Term (9 months)*
The successful candidate will be able to teach mathematics for non-majors, and multivariable calculus. The ideal candidate will also be able to teach introductory physics. Applicants should possess an M.Sc. or a Ph.D.

Science Lab Instructor - *Full Time, Limited Term (9 months)*
The successful candidate will be able to instruct labs in Introductory Environmental Science, Introductory Chemistry, and Introductory Biology (and/or Cell Biology). Applicants should possess an M.Sc. although applicants with a B.Sc. (Honours) with laboratory experience will be considered.

Part-time Instructor in Dutch
The successful candidate will be able to teach one or two sections of Beginning Dutch for the 2005-06 academic year. The course introduces university students to both conversational and written Dutch, and includes instruction in grammar. Minimum M.A. is preferred; teaching experience at the senior secondary or university level is required.

Interested applicants should submit a *curriculum vitae,* two letters of reference, and a one-page or two-page statement describing their own faith commitment and how it shapes their academic work. The deadline for applications is **May 31, 2005** or until the positions are filled.

Direct general inquiries and applications to:
Dr. Jacob P. Ellens, Vice-President (Academic)
Redeemer University College
777 Garner Road East
Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4 Canada
jellens@redeemer.on.ca. www.redeemer.on.ca

Redeemer University College offers equal employment opportunities to qualified applicants. In accordance with Canadian Immigration requirements, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be considered first for these positions.

For issue dates, deadlines, ad rates, and information see our website.
Job Opportunities are also posted on our website: www.christiancourier.ca

Classifieds

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*Other rates apply for RRSP/RIF plans

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www.redeemer.on.ca stewardship@redeemer.on.ca

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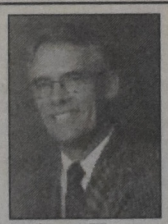

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Radio- From Coast to Coast
3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1 Burlington ON L7R 3Y8 **Web: www.backtogod.net/**

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake – CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos – CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton – CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni – CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George – CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton – CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers – CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland – CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon – CJIB	9:30 pm	94

ALBERTA

Brooks – CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray – CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River – CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham – CFCO	6:30 am	630
Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing – CKAP	7:00 am	580
London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Tilsonburg – CKOT	9:02 am	101.3
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30 am	920
Woodstock – CJFH	7:30 am	94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby – CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax – CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney – CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth – CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor – CFAB	8:30 am	1450

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ON CTS Sat. - 7:30pm
AB Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs.- 9:00pm

Kids Corner Radio

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Drayton Valley. CIBW 92.9 FM ..... Sun. 8:30 am
High River/Calgary CHRB 1140 AM..Sun. 4:30pm
Nordegg CHBW 93.9 FM. .....Sun. 8:30 am
Rocky Mtn.House CHBW 94.5 FM .....Sun. 8:30 am

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Prince Rupert.. CIAJ 100.7 FM .....Sat. 10 am

MANITOBA
Altona CFAM 950 AM ..... Sun. 4 pm
Steinbach CHSM 1250 AM ..... Sun. 4 pm

NOVA SCOTIA
Bridgewater CKBW 1000 AM .....Sun. 5:30 am

ONTARIO
Oshawa CKDO 1350 AM .....Sat. 8 am
Woodstock CJFH 94.3 FM .....Sat. 8 am

SASKATCHEWAN
Estevan CJSL 1280 AM .....Sun. 7 am
Weyburn CJSL 1190 AM .....Sun. 7 am

Arie Hoogerbrugge
Associate Broker
RE/MAX Del Mar Realty Inc.
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Website: www.houseplus.com/ariehoogerbrugge

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9.00 am Saturday mornings
CJLX 92.3 FM Belleville Ont.
7.30 pm Sunday nights

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Email: dvanderwoerd@rossmcbride.com

The series of articles on
Ecclesiastes,
Why go to Church
&
The Lord's Prayer
are available on our website:
christiancourier.ca

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

April 15 **Ambassadors** Christian Male Chorus, Zion United Reformed Church 1238 Old Hwy 8, **Sheffield**. For information, call 905-389-2104 or 905-689-5266 or 905-714-0126. Visit us at www.ambassadorschoir.ca

April 22 **Ambassadors** Christian Male Chorus, Covenant CRC, **St. Catharines**. For information, call 905-389-2104 or 905-689-5266 or 905-714-0126. Visit us at www.ambassadorschoir.ca

April 23 **Ambassadors** Christian Male Chorus, Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis.** For information, call 905-389-2104 or 905-689-5266 or 905-714-0126. Visit us at www.ambassadorschoir.ca

May 1 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. **Knox** Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas** (Freewill offering) Info: (519) 637-4357

May 1 **Dutch Service** will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

May 7 **Liberation Choir 60th Anniversary Concert**, with the Guelph Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 at **Hamilton** Place. Tickets: $20, $30, $40. Available from choir members/ box office/ www.organs.ca

May 11 **CLASSIS HURON** will meet D.V. in regular session on **May 11, 2005** in the New Life CRC of **Guelph** On., at 9:30 am. See ad below.

May 30 - June 3 **Milk & Honey Festival** at Redeemer University College, **Ancaster**. The "Stories of Life, Stories for Life" theme features lectures by Dr. James Rusthoven and Professor Johanna Kuyvenhoven, concerts and excursions in the area. For registration contact the Redeemer Box Office 877-779-0913 ext 4211.

June 8 Hollandse Dag, 10 a.m at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. For more information call H. Rumph at 1-519-638-2053 or see May 16 issue.

June 24-26 Christian Reformed Church of **Kentville, Nova Scotia** will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary. For more details contace Gerrit Tenyenhuis, ph.1-902-678-7641 or gtenyenhuis@nssympatico.ca or the church at 1-902-678-6293 or fax 1-902-679-5230. Email: kentvillecrc@ns.sympatico.ca

July 1-3 **Nobleford CRC** 100 year anniversary celebrations with picnic, banquet and services. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at bpkbelt@telus.net

July 8-10 **Charlottetown Christian Ref. Church** will be celebrating 50 years of ministry. For information, contact the church office at **902-894-4721** or email: chtowncrc@pei.aibn.com.

CLASSIS HURON
will meet D.V. in regular session on **May 11, 2005** in the New Life CRC of **Guelph** On., at 9:30 am.
All materials for the printed Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk of Classis no later than April 6, 2005.
Stated clerk:
Rev. Ed Den Haan
56 Walman Dr
Guelph ON N1G 4G8
email:
edenhaan@sympatico.ca
Phone 519-824- 4524

On July 1-3, 2005

THE NOBLEFORD CRC

invites all former members and interested persons to join us in celebrating 100 years of God's faithfulness.

A combined **picnic** with the Granum CRC is scheduled for July 1 at Park Lake with many planned activities. On Saturday, there will be an historical tour of the area followed by an open house at the original church now located in Picture Butte. A **banquet** will be held at the Nobleford Community Complex on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. On Sunday, the morning **worship service** will be held at the Community Complex at 10:00 a.m. with **lunch** to follow. A second service is planned for 1:30 p.m. at Nobleford CRC.

Registration costs for the banquet will be $25.00 per person on or before April 30, 2005 and is limited to persons ages 13 and over. After April 30 the cost will be $30.00 per person. Camping is also available from June 30 - July 4 at Park Lake in the Reserved Group Areas at a cost of $10 per night. There are a max. of 50 sites. Please forward your registrations for banquet and/or camping to Jackie Postman at Box 212, Nobleford AB T0L 1S0 and include the name(s) of those planning to attend the banquet and/or which nights you would like to reserve for camping. Make your cheque/money order payable to CRC of Nobleford Anniversary Fund. For more information contact Bert/Pat Konynenbelt at (403)824-3442 or by e-mail at **bpkbelt@telus.net** Also check out our website **www.noblefordcrc.com**

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Mugabe tightens grip on Zimbabwe

Abraham McLaughlin

HARARE, ZIMBABWE – After ruling Zimbabwe for 25 years with an increasingly iron fist, President Robert Mugabe's grip on power just got a whole lot tighter.

The elections held at the end of March – endorsed by regional leaders but which critics say was manipulated – emasculated the strongest opposition party in Southern Africa and gave Mr. Mugabe unchecked control over this nation of 12 million.

For opposition leaders and some Western governments, including the U.S., it was a setback for Africa's march toward democracy. But backers like South African President Thabo Mbeki say that Mugabe's secured position may encourage him to become more moderate, revving up his country's moribund economy and reconnecting with the outside world. The first test of that theory will come soon: By one estimate, millions of Zimbabweans could face starvation within six months, but Mugabe has blocked outside aid groups from operating in the country.

Official results gave Mugabe's ruling party 78 of 120 elected seats in Parliament, to the opposition's 41. That's a huge jump – and drop – from 2000, when the ruling party won 62 to the opposition's 57. With 30 additional seats appointed by the president, Mugabe now has the two-thirds seats necessary to change the Constitution at will. At a victorious press conference. The octogenarian declared that he'll rule until he's 100, contradicting earlier promises to retire by 2008.

"The ball is fully in Mugabe's court," says Reginald Matchaba, head of the Zimbabwe Election Support Network here.

It could mean the government continues to restrict the activities of nongovernmental organizations, gag independent media, and use food to cajole hungry rural residents into supporting it.

Given Mugabe's high profile on the continent, this bodes ill for the U.S.'s push for democracy here. President Bush called South Africa's Mr. Mbeki his "point man" on Zimbabwe in 2003. But now there "could well be a gap" between the U.S. and South Africa, says a Western diplomat in Harare. From the U.S. perspective, he says, "South Africa ought to think a little more out of the box" in dealing with Zimbabwe.

But South Africa has new hopes in the wake of the election. From its perspective, "The best way to create democracy" in the long term "is to create stability first," says Chris Maroleng, a Zimbabwean analyst at the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, South Africa. Now that Mugabe has solidified his political power, he says, South Africa can help it reengage with the world. Mugabe needs international "political legitimacy," Mr. Maroleng says.

He also needs the world's help. "Five to six months from now," explains the diplomat, "unless something is done, Zimbabwe will run out of food."

Meanwhile, the election results leave the once-vibrant Movement for Democratic Change on the ropes. MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai said he was "deeply disturbed" by election irregularities, and called on people to "defend their right to a free and fair election." But he stopped short of asking people to demonstrate. Mugabe said Saturday that he would meet any protests with force.

Still, Mugabe can claim some legitimacy for the election. South Africa's observer mission said it represented the people's "free will." But the U.S. and European Union said it wasn't free or fair. In the end, says Dr. Matchaba, the danger for Zimbabwe is "that you're relying on one individual and what he decides to do."

Abraham McLaughlin is a writer for The Christian Science Monitor

Indonesian island hit by quake is a largely Christian community

Wolfgang Polzer

GUNUNGSITOLI/WUPPERTAL (ANS) – The earthquake off the coast of Sumatra hit an island predominately inhabited by Christians. The quake on Easter Monday with a magnitude of 8.7 on the Richter scale devastated the Indonesian island of Nias. More than 90 percent of the 700,000 inhabitants are Protestants. In 1865 German missionaries came to the spice island and converted many native headhunters.

The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) in Wuppertal, Germany, is in contact with its member churches on the island. The Indonesian government estimates that the quake caused some 2,500 deaths on the island, so it claimed more lives there than the December 26 tsunami. The UN set the number of deaths at "over 1,000" and the number of homeless at 15,000 families.

Church officials estimate that 75 percent of the main town, Gunungsitoli, with a population of 30,000 has been destroyed.

Thousands fled in panic to higher ground around the town. Gaping holes and cracks have made some streets impassable, which were still under repair from the December tsunami. Because of the numerous violent aftershocks, people were afraid to return to their homes and many camped out in the middle of the streets. The U.S. Geological Survey registered at least 150 aftershocks, more than 20 a day. Some of them registered over 5 on the Richter scale.

Initial reports also speak of serious damage to church buildings: at least two churches as well as schools and kindergartens have been destroyed. Many shops have also been damaged; therefore food, power and fuel are in short supply. Provisions must be brought in from outside.

The U.S. Navy hospital ship Mercy, which arrived a week after the quake, is providing much-needed extra beds for the thousands of injured, who earlier needed to be flown hundreds of kilometers to facilities on Sumatra Island.

Although ships carrying food and water soon got through to Nias and its northern neighbor Simeulue, the shattered roads and collapsed bridges severely hampered distribution.

Main roads and bridges have been destroyed and the airport is only open to a few light aircraft. The earthquake damaged many water pipelines, but shortages have been alleviated by two UNICEF water treatment plants.

Wolfgang Polzer is senior news editor of the Evangelical News Agency idea, Wetzlar, Germany.

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News briefs

Alzheimer's prevention

Doctors have learned that besides keeping active and lowering your blood pressure, taking a combination of vitamins C and E may be helpful in warding off Alzheimer's disease. Recent studies have suggested, however, that high doses of vitamin E may be lethal. That's one way of avoiding Alzheimer's you may not prefer.

A couple of glasses of wine a day may also be helpful. The trouble with that remedy is that if you're getting old like me, you may lose count, and those two glasses may turn into three or four or more. Drink enough and you won't worry about Alzheimer's.

The onset of the disease has been successfully treated with a combination of antibiotics. Apparently microscopic little critters (chlamydia) associated with nothing more serious than a severe cold can get into your brain and raise havoc there. The antibiotics reportedly have been shown to arrest the disease in some.

You can also stave off Alzheimer's by stimulating your brain – read the *Christian Courier* so you can engage your spouse in long theological and political debates.

Cheeseburgers on the mind

Here's a recent scientific study that should cheer up those of you who love bacon and eggs for breakfast and a Whopper at noon. Although cholesterol isn't good for the heart, it helps your mental functioning. People with higher cholesterol get more bright ideas.

Scientists at Boston University said they were reluctant to release their findings that cholesterol is a good brain lubricant. I can understand why: they undoubtedly envisioned a generation of students coming to philosophy class munching on cheeseburgers to help them digest those high density lectures on Kant and Hegel.

Make your bed, but at your peril

Here's news you may want to hide from your kids. It's bedroom stuff. Researchers say making your bed is unhealthy. A British study that says unmade beds discourage the dust mites that have been linked to asthma, hay fever and skin diseases. The tiny creatures like the environment of made beds but cannot survive in a well-aired bed. I can hear the kids already: "But, Mom, do you want me going to bed with millions of little bugs?"

Over half of Canadian pre-schoolers in day care

According to Statistics Canada, over 50 percent of kids between 6 months and 5 years of age spent at least some time in Child care in 2000-2001, an average of 27 hours a week. This is up 10 percent over what it was 6 years ago. About 25 percent of these kids were in day care centers.

Having a relative take care of your child is becoming less popular, but varied from province to province. In Saskatchewan about 46 percent of kids in this age range were cared for by some relative and only 10 percent went to day care centers. In Quebec, where day care centers are subsidized, 4 times as many kids went to daycare centers and far fewer were in the care of relatives.